

A
QUESTION
OF
RACISM

IN THESE TIMES

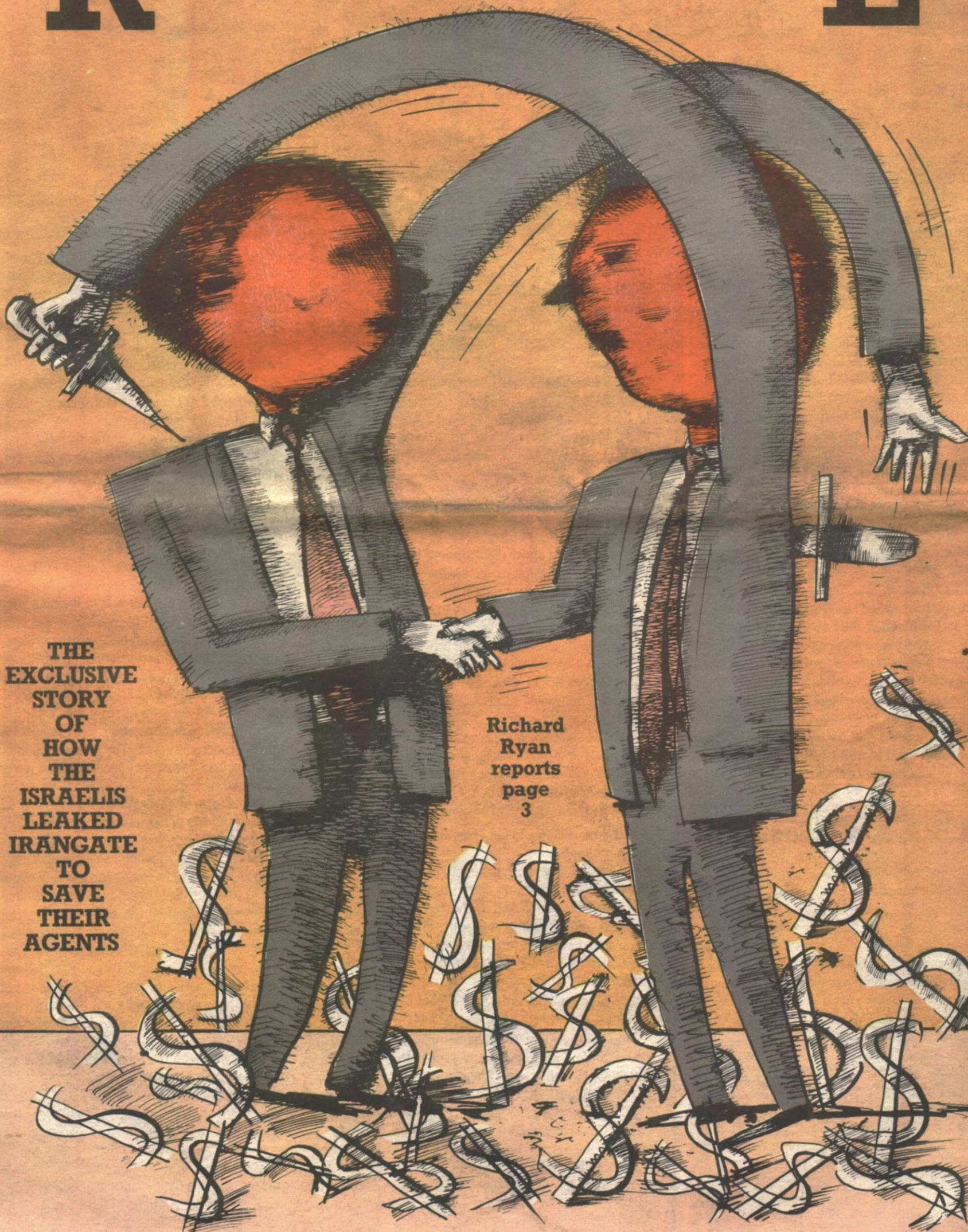
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REVENGE IS REVENGE



THE
EXCLUSIVE
STORY
OF
HOW
THE
ISRAELIS
LEAKED
IRANGATE
TO
SAVE
THEIR
AGENTS

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Ryan
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Past and future of hostage crisis in Middle East

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

As *In These Times* went to press, an unconfirmed report from West Germany said the British negotiator Terry Waite had been shot and seriously wounded in Lebanon. Is the administration planning to attack the terrorists who seized Waite in the first place? After all, eight Americans are also being held in Lebanon. The administration may be planning an attack—indeed, by the time you read this the U.S. may have turned the Bekaa Valley into the Great Plains—but it has no chance of freeing hostages by doing this. And it may not succeed in deterring future hostage-taking. The only reason for using the military would be to win new support for the administration at home and to curry favor with the American people and to draw attention away from the Iran-contra scandal.

Could the administration try to rescue the hostages through a commando raid?

It's highly unlikely that this could be done. When Iranian militants seized American hostages in 1979, we did not know exactly what faction or party the militants represented, but we knew where they were holding the hostages. In Lebanon, we are not even certain who they are or where they are holding the hostages.

But haven't the groups identified themselves by name? For instance, an organization called Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine said that it seized the four Americans from American University and

INSIDE STORY

another organization called the Organization of the Weakened on Earth seized the two West Germans. There are a few major organizations like Hezbollah, the Party of God, but many of the organizations are composed of a handful of militants and have been created for a specific purpose, like seizing a hostage. Assad Abukhalil, a Georgetown University expert on Shi'ite fundamentalism, believes that the Organization of the Weakened on Earth and Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, which claimed credit for the abductions last month, may have been set up in this manner.

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According to Abukhalil, Ali Abbas Hamadi, the brother of Mohammed Ali Hamadi, who was arrested by the West Germans on January 13 for the TWA hijacking and a high-ranking official of Hezbollah, could have set up one of these groups for the express purpose of trying to free his brother.

Is there a connection between all these organizations? What holds all the organizations together is Shi'ite fundamentalism. They want to establish a Shi'ite Islamic Republic in Lebanon tied to Iran's Islamic Republic. The other groups in Lebanon—Maronite Christians, Druze, Sunni Moslems—would have to accept inferior status in such a state. Fouad Adjami, professor at Johns Hopkins and author of *The Arab Predicament*, calls this goal a "Shia delusion."

Are the groups under the control of Iran? The Shi'ite fundamentalists see themselves as part of a worldwide movement whose leadership is in Iran. But they don't represent the government of Iran. Instead, they represent or simply reflect the different factions struggling for power in Iran. Assad Abukhalil believes that some of the current hostage-taking may be explained in this light. Lebanese partisans of Hossein Ali Montazeri, the Ayatollah Khomeini's designated successor, may have been trying to embarrass Iran's Speaker of the Parliament Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani, who backed the arms for hostage trade with the U.S. government, by taking more hostages. (The detention of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Gerald Seib may also have been an attempt by the Montazeri faction to embarrass Rafsanjani.)

Do all the Shi'ites in Lebanon identify with one of these groups? Definitely not. The more moderate position is represented by Nabih Berri, the leader of the Amal Militia. Berri, who has not backed the hostage-taking, favors a new Lebanese constitution in which the Shi'ites are given a share of power in the government, which is now dominated by Sunni Moslems and Maronite Christians proportional to their numbers. But the fundamentalists have increasingly gained a following at Berri's expense. And he is increasingly seen as a tool of Syria.

How did these Shi'ite fundamentalists get started? One must go back to the difference between the Shi'ite and Sunni Moslems. Upon the death of the prophet Mohammed in 632 A.D., Islam split into two rival camps. The majority, called the Sunnis, believed that Mohammed's successor should be elected at large, while the minority, the Shi'ites, believed that Mohammed's successor should be a direct descendant of the prophet. In 680 A.D., the Shi'ites were defeated by Sunni armies at Karbala in Iraq. Political scientist John Esposito writes, "Unlike the Sunnis, who perceive a past characterized by success and power, the Shi'ites see themselves as

oppressed and disinherited, prevented by Sunni governments from assuming their rightful place in Islam."

The Shi'ites make up about 15 percent of the world's Moslems. In the 16th century they gained control of Persia (Iran), but elsewhere in the Mideast they were a weak minority sect that eschewed politics for religious devotion. It was only in the '70s, under the leadership of Musa Sadr, that Lebanon's increasingly urban Shi'ites began to participate in politics.

Two great events pushed the Shi'ites into politics: the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon in 1982. The Iranian revolution rekindled the dreams of an Islamic revolution that would sweep away not only Western and Zionist influence, but also the Sunnis. Fouad Adjami describes the Israeli occupation as the "midwife" of the Shi'ite resurgence. The Israelis drove out the PLO, which had dominated the politics of southern Lebanon. And by trying to install Christian rule in the place of the PLO, the Israelis radicalized the Shi'ites. It was during the Israeli occupation that fundamentalist groups like Hezbollah emerged and began to engage in acts of terror.

Do the Shi'ites have anything to do with Libya's Muammar Khadafy?

Lebanon's Shi'ites hate Khadafy, whom they blame for the mysterious disappearance in Tripoli in 1978 of Shi'ite leader Musa Sadr. The American bombing could not have had any direct effect on Shi'ite terrorism in Lebanon.

Who captured Terry Waite?

No one outside of Beirut seems to know. According to Abukhalil, the fact that no single group has claimed credit for Waite's abduction suggests that there was considerable debate among the fundamentalist sects about whether Waite should be declared a hostage.

But why abduct him at all?

Waite had never been particularly welcomed by the Shi'ite fundamentalists, who didn't see him as having genuine religious credentials and who believe that he might be a cover for American interests in Lebanon. The Iranian arms deal strengthened this conviction. "The revelation of the Iran arms deal reinforced suspicions that he was a cover for the Americans," Abukhalil says.

What has been the overall effect of the arms-for-hostages deal on terrorist activity?

It certainly hasn't diminished hostage-taking since seven Americans have been seized since the negotiations with Iran began. And it probably has given a boost to terrorism both by suggesting that the U.S. will be willing to ransom hostages and by involving American citizens unwittingly in a Shi'ite factional battle in Iran. It has also undermined the attempts of third parties like Waite to negotiate for the hostages. In short, the American policy had no redeeming social value.

By Richard Ryan

WASHINGTON

The premise of this In These Times report—that the Israelis leaked the story of the Iranian arms deal to protect their agents—is, to say the least, startling. It does, however, clarify several bizarre events that have troubled "Irangate" watchers over the past few months. The story that follows was compiled from newspaper reports, court and congressional records, and interviews with sources in the U.S., Bermuda and Israel.

THE ISRAELIS LEAKED IRANGATE TO SAVE their own intelligence agents—agents who the White House had ordered arrested to exert control over hundreds of millions of dollars worth of arms that have been flowing into Iran, according to sources in Israel's defense and intelligence communities. This directly contradicts the widely reported story that the arms-for-hostages deal was leaked by two Iranians—a story that had mysterious inconsistencies.

One mystery is the way the story came out: last November 3 the little Beirut news-weekly *Al Shiraa*, run by Hassan Sabra, who describes himself as a "leftist Nasserite," printed the first story detailing how a former Reagan adviser had travelled to Iran to negotiate an arms-for-hostages deal. According to Sabra, two highly placed Iranian officials flew to Beirut to give him the story. What hasn't been explained is why any Iranian official would want to embarrass the Ayatollah Khomeini, who personally approved the arms-for-hostages deal, or why these mysterious sources would want to strike such a devastating blow to Iran's supply lines in its war against Iraq.

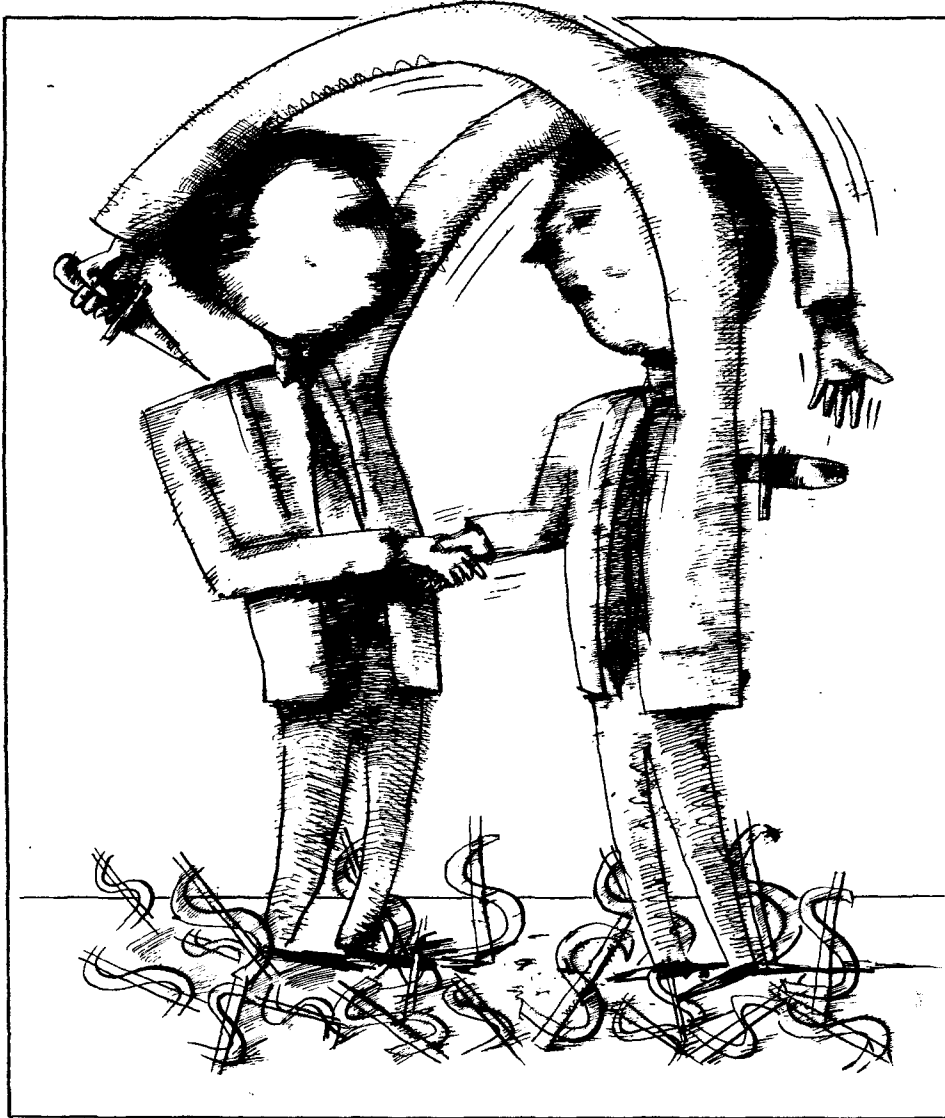
Therein lies one enigma. A second mystery is why, when the story of the arms deal first came out months earlier, no one paid attention to it—a revelation that has received almost no attention in the U.S. media. In fact, in April of last year, the U.S. Customs Department arrested 15 purported arms dealers, who were indicted for attempting to sell American-made arms to Iran in violation of the government's longstanding ban on such sales.

After they were arrested, this collection of gun-runners, which included four Israeli citizens, began talking about how they had often been in contact with the U.S. and Israeli governments, and how they were selling arms to Iran only because they had been assured that it was official U.S. policy to do so. The Israeli government, however, denied its connection to the scheme, and the U.S. government began prosecuting the 15 "merchants to terrorists" for conspiracy. The arrested men languished in obscurity for months until the full story of the arms-for-hostages deal began to emerge.

So here's the quandary: Why did the Reagan administration allow its Justice Department to indict a group of people who knew all about the Iranian arms deal? Didn't Attorney General Edwin Meese think the defendants would reveal the U.S. government's involvement? How did the administration know that the Israelis would deny any connection to the men who now appear to be their agents? And what was Israel's role in the whole Iranian arms deal?

The part played by the National Security Council (NSC) in the genesis of the arms-for-hostages affair is central to unraveling these mysteries. As the recently released Senate

How the Israelis leaked Irangate to save their own intelligence agents



Intelligence Committee report makes clear, since at least mid-1985 the administration has been formulating its Mideast policy through the NSC, a group of presidential advisers who, unlike the State Department and the CIA, are not directly accountable to Congress. (Meese is a member of the NSC, and *The Wall Street Journal* recently reported that he received regular briefings on the status of the arms-for-hostages deal.)

By 1985 the NSC had undertaken the difficult business of selling arms to Iran—a country that most Americans perceived as an enemy and a country that the State Department had publicly branded a terrorist nation. The administration's rationale for the arms sales, at the time, was to influence Iran's regime to release U.S. hostages in Lebanon.

Later, when it discovered how much the Iranians were willing to pay for U.S. arms—often twice the market value—the White House began to use the Iranian sales to finance all sorts of operations the administration couldn't get Congress to fund.

At the same time, Israel was also selling arms to Iran—a fact that has been a more-or-less open secret since 1980. Conservative Israeli hardliner Ariel Sharon openly re-affirmed in 1982 his nation's arms sales to Iran. Israel, like the U.S., appreciated the substantial amounts of cash that Iran paid for arms. But more important, the Iranians were using the weapons to make war on Israel's hated enemy, Iraq.

Israel seemed the perfect agent for the Reagan administration's Iran arms sales. The Israelis already had contacts with the Iranian

government, they were competent and they were discreet. Best of all, by involving Israel, the administration had fulfilled the crucial "precept of deniability": always have someone else between yourself and a criminal act. If the story ever broke, the White House could blame Israel—which is exactly what happened when everything began to come apart.

Remember, however, that this administration has always liked working with businessmen. Many of those close to the president have been businessmen themselves, and there's no bigger industry in the Mideast than the arms trade. So when the NSC decided to begin arms sales to Iran, it planned a two-track approach: one level would involve the Israeli government; the other would involve establishing new contacts with Iran through private arms dealers in the region.

Enter Cyrus Hashemi: Hashemi, who was related to several Iranian officials, left his homeland after the revolution to work

"For a government to turn its back on its own spy, that is something burglars do."

as an arms dealer. But he maintained his contacts with powerful friends back in Tehran, and became a go-between for Iran and the outside world.

Yet Hashemi ran into trouble. Sometime in the early '80s, federal agents caught him

trying to buy U.S. arms for Iran, according to federal documents. Rather than go to jail, Hashemi agreed to become a U.S. Customs informer, while continuing to arrange arms sales to Iran. In this capacity, he could relay to the Reagan administration the names of people selling American arms to Iran, and then the administration could decide whether to arrest them publicly and appear to be taking a hard line on terrorism, or do business with them secretly and pump Iran for hostages and contra funding.

Late in 1985 Hashemi began to circulate in the arms community, looking for people who wanted to sell U.S. weapons to Iran for top dollar, according to federal court documents. Eventually, he hooked up with William Northrop, a West Point graduate who had emigrated to Israel after serving a tour of duty in Vietnam. Northrop claimed to be simply a private Tel Aviv arms merchant, but in reality he was a high-ranking officer in Mossad, Israel's secret service.

In January 1986 Northrop met in Athens with Hashemi's representative, a man named Sam Evans. Northrop trusted Evans, who was also an attorney for Adnan Khashoggi, the millionaire Saudi arms dealer. Evans' contacts were good, and he assured the Israelis that Hashemi would be willing to pay millions of dollars for U.S.-made arms.

But in Athens Northrop did something unexpected: he gave Evans a list of four Israeli prisoners of war being held in Lebanon—including a young American immigrant—to be released before the Israelis would approve the transfer of the nearly \$1 billion worth of arms that Hashemi was requesting, according to federal court documents.

At this point, according to Israeli sources familiar with the case, the deal began to fall apart. When Northrop presented his list of hostages, it became obvious to U.S. officials monitoring Hashemi that Israel intended to use the deal to further its own foreign-policy objectives. This was unacceptable; until the U.S. could establish its own direct lines to Tehran, the Reagan administration expected the Israelis to subordinate themselves to U.S. interests. The administration decided to shut down the Hashemi-Evans-Northrop transaction.

Hashemi asked Northrop and other arms dealers in the operation to meet him in the U.S., supposedly to finalize their negotiations. (It is unclear whether U.S. Customs officials knew they were monitoring a government-authorized arms deal or if in fact the Justice Department let Customs believe their sting on the Israelis was legitimate.) In the meantime, federal prosecutors prepared their case against Northrop and his companions.

Change of plans: Northrop had no intention of returning to the U.S., however. Though he knew that the deal he and his friends were involved in had the Israeli government's approval, he was wary of the U.S., according to defendants in the federal arms case. During the previous year the Americans had broken several Israeli intelligence operations in the U.S., culminating with the

Continued on page 10

By Joel Bleifuss

When just saying no is not enough...

...get on that bandwagon. "Yes, there is a change in our employee manual," *Rolling Stone* Publicity Manager Hope Hening told *In These Times*. *Rolling Stone* management now reserves the right to test employees for drugs.

"Torture and so on" in El Salvador

Police torture is so widespread in El Salvador that the country does not deserve the \$7 million in police aid President Reagan is asking Congress to approve this year. That is the conclusion of *El Salvador Update: Counterterrorism in Action*, a report released last week by the Unitarian Church and the Southern California Ecumenical Council. Last May the two organizations sent a research team to El Salvador to investigate U.S. assistance to the Salvadoran police. The team discovered that "most political prisoners are held incommunicado and are tortured by the police before being brought to the prisons where they await trial." That torture continues despite the fact that the national police are now trained, according to the report, either by U.S. military instructors in El Salvador or by federal agents under the auspices of the State Department's Office of Counter-Terrorism in the U.S. Three "students" who attended one of the U.S.-based classes have been accused by human rights activists of being members of death squads. As U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) said, "We're training hard-core killers to be more efficient." Meanwhile, down in El Salvador, the U.S. military does the training, but takes a hands-off approach when the police get to work. One U.S. officer told the investigating team, "My guys aren't even allowed to be present at the interrogation. Not because I think they're going to participate, but because it leaves them open to a whole series of accusations about participating in torture and so on."

As Michael Ledeen sees it

Intellectual nematode Michael Ledeen (see *In These Times*, Jan. 21) is helping explain the roots of what he calls the "Iranian/contra business" through his Presswatch column in the *American Spectator* (February 1987). Though he doesn't hit at where his busy fingers may have been, Ledeen does say that this crisis involves "much higher stakes" than Watergate since "this time, the crisis strikes directly at the foreign policy community." According to Ledeen the problem stems from "lack of discipline in the foreign policy bureaucracy (above all, leaks)." And those "leakers," says Ledeen, "are very often those who were excluded from the policy, are angry at being 'out of the loop' and are consequently trying to shoot down those who excluded them." Could one of those who did the excluding include Ledeen himself? According to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Ledeen "appears to have played a key role in the initial contact between the U.S. and Israel vis-a-vis Iran."

Ledeen's press awards

Ledeen, in his above-mentioned February column, also gave out awards to members of the press—those "playing 'Jr. Watergate,' those cheated at being born too late to participate in the overthrow of the Nixon regime." His award for "worst essay" on the Iranian/contra business went "by acclamation" to Michael Kinsley, editor of the *New Republic*. Kinsley began his editorial last December 22, titled "A Case for Glee," this way: "The only irritating aspect of the otherwise delightful collapse of the Reagan administration is the widespread insistence that we must all be poker-faced about it." Kinsley goes on to give good reasons why we should all enjoy the spectacle. Ledeen was not the only commentator to damn this as heresy. The *Washington Post's* David Broder responded to "Juvenile" Kinsley in his column:

"The continuing crisis in the Reagan administration is having one beneficial side effect: it is sorting out the grownups from the juveniles... juveniles are jubilant... the grownups see this disaster for what it is, a calamity to the nation, and would do anything in their power to put it in the past.... [Kinsley] is as devoid of learning skills as the bellicose Buchanan.... 'Spare us these juveniles who won't learn or can't understand that the presidency is too damn important for their mock-war games.'" Of course, you have to understand Broder's position in raising the presidential standard. If he didn't, six years' worth of *Post* columns analyzing White House officials as serious grownups might seem a little silly, now that people are seeing Reagan and Co. for the rogues they are and always have been.

THE PINOCCHIO PRESIDENT

... IT JUST KEEPS GROW

FCC tries to tune out community broadcasters

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has—under the reign of Chairman Mark Fowler—been ingenious in finding ways to take diversity out of the public airwaves. The latest victim is community radio.

In what is the first decision of its kind in U.S. communications history, FCC Administrative Law Judge Walter Miller last November withdrew the non-commercial broadcasting license of the Dallas community-based Agape Broadcasting Foundation and turned it over to the wealthy fundamentalist Criswell Center for Biblical Studies.

"It's virtually unprecedented," said Agape attorney Sam Buffone, who is appealing the decision. "The commission has always had a hands-off policy in the past with non-commercial stations." While the Commission has changed its policies over the past six years to favor the wealthy, the Dallas case indicates it is now taking a more active approach to ensure that the airwaves are placed in the right hands.

Agape Broadcasting Foundation, during its management of station KNON-FM, managed to create something Dallas had never heard before: a true community station—"The Voice of the People," as its logo says. Dedicated to serving Dallas' low-income and minority communities, of which there are many, KNON broadcasts Vietnamese music, gay public affairs, American Indian programming, a "labor hour," bilingual news and music and, of course, "Radio Jalapeno" and other Texas programs. "If that ain't serving the community," argued a writer for one community magazine, "then grits ain't groceries."

The Criswell Center for Biblical Studies is an arm of the First Baptist

Church of Dallas, the largest Southern Baptist Church in the country with an annual budget of \$9 million. Criswell's board members include the vice president of Hunt Oil Company, a CEO of another Texas oil company, trustees of several banks, attorneys, investment bankers and a physician. Criswell already holds broadcasting licenses in Abilene, Weatherford, Brownwood, Palestine and also another non-commercial license in Dallas. Their Dallas station currently broadcasts religious programming to the entire city.

Of the five non-commercial frequencies licensed to Dallas, according to Jim Schutze of the *Dallas Times Herald*, three are now owned by "conservative Christian organizations." The other is a classical music station. Agape in 1983 became the first station to broadcast bilingual programming in this heavily Hispanic city.

Judge Miller found Agape underserving of an FCC license in part because KNON had been off the air between 1979 and 1983 and had thus, he argued, not served the community responsibly. In 1978 the station's transmitter was destroyed by a thunderstorm. In 1979 KNON filed for permission to broadcast from a new site. The FCC did not

grant their request until 1983. KNON had been broadcasting for two years—each year doubling its number of community supporters—when the Criswell Center launched its license challenge in 1985. KNON, which had finally raised enough money from its listeners to increase its power, was forced to spend its savings on legal fees.

Miller also ruled that Agape had not been candid with the FCC in its relations with community group ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), and that ACORN was a closet owner of KNON.

KNON station manager Jeff Murray says that KNON and ACORN share an interest in empowering low-income and minority constituents, and that it is necessary and more effective for them to work together. "Of course we cooperate with organizations that share our concerns. That's what community radio is all about." Murray believes that the judge's accusation is more appropriate for Criswell and First Baptist. Criswell requires its board members to belong to First Baptist, whereas Agape has no such requirement for its board.

The low-income, minority and previously unheard-from residents of Dallas are not tuning out. On Dec. 6, 1986, more than 5,000 people marched through downtown Dallas (and past the First Baptist Church) in an eclectic parade that included rap artists, high school marching bands, Gray Panthers, low riders, Africans for KNON, local politicians, gospel singers, gay rights groups and country musicians.

Still on the air, awaiting a final verdict from the FCC, KNON has launched its most ambitious fundraising drive to date. The station needs money to pay legal costs of appealing the decision.

—Caroline Senter

The author is the director of the Affiliated Media Foundation Movement, a New Orleans-based media network, which holds a consulting contract with KNON.



MARK FOWLER



Luc Williams/Kansas City Times

Roadside detraction

This billboard has reappeared along Interstate 35 in Kansas City, Mo., now that Republicans have picked New Orleans for the 1988 GOP Convention. The sign was erected January 5, but was removed while Kansas City was being considered as a site for the convention.

Guatemala campaigns for Central American parliament

GUATEMALA CITY—Guatemalan officials announced last week a new, broad, diplomatic initiative aimed at reactivating a dialogue to form a Central American parliament and to revive regional peace negotiations.

The initiative reflects the scramble by Guatemalan authorities to shore up the country's policy of neutrality in Central America in the wake of a series of international reports implicating Guatemalan military officers and others in arms trafficking to the Nicaraguan contras (see *In These Times*, Feb. 4).

Neutrality is a cornerstone of Guatemala's foreign policy. Following the historic meeting of Central American presidents in May 1986, organized by Guatemala, President Vinicio Cerezo emerged as a leader in regional negotiations. Since then Cerezo has been able to resist pressures to adopt an anti-Sandinista stand by relying on support from the Contadora peace-seeking nations and the European Economic Community (EEC).

In October Cerezo toured five of the EEC countries where he received overwhelming statements of support for his government's neutrality, backed by promises of almost \$300 million in economic aid.

Not surprisingly, then, officials emphatically insist the government will not alter its neutrality policy, despite reports of military aid to the contras and alleged army pressures on the civilian government.

"We will not fill body bags in the service of the superpowers," said President Cerezo last week. "Guatemala will not abandon its policy of neutrality in the Central American conflict."

Guatemala will redouble its efforts this year to inspire "the Central American nations to sit down

at the negotiating table," Vice Minister of Foreign Relations Rodrigo Montusar told *In These Times*. "The Central American parliament's creation would be a basic instrument to revive regional dialogue."

Last year's agreement to form a parliament originally proposed by Guatemala and envisioned as a regional forum for the Central Americans to discuss their grievances free from foreign intervention, was seen as a major boost for the peace process.

But the project has been stalled since September due to diplomatic fallout caused by Nicaragua's case before the International Court of Justice against Honduras and Costa Rica, for allegedly harboring contras in their territories.

"Our foreign policy this year will be based on neutrality and the formation of the Central American parliament," said Guatemala's Vice President Roberto Carpio in a press conference last week.

Carpio, responsible for overseeing the parliament's creation, revamped some aspect of the proposal to speed up its formation. The original proposal, for example, calls for immediate, open elections in each country to choose their 10 representatives to the parliament. This was criticized internationally as a possible attempt to apply political pressure on Nicaragua to carry out new elections, thereby converting the parliament into a "Trojan horse" for the Sandinistas.

In the new document, elections would be postponed for two years and each nation's legislative assembly would name their representatives in the interim, thereby alleviating pressures on Nicaragua and on El Salvador, whose Christian Democratic government now faces a broad domestic opposition movement (see *In These Times*, Jan. 28).

Last week Vice President Carpio began a diplomatic tour of Central America to muster support to re-initiate dialogue. A vice presidential adviser told *In These Times* that while officials are confident that

only minor differences remain with Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador, Honduras remains a major obstacle.

Indeed, in a meeting with Honduran officials on February 2, Honduras President Jose Azcona reaffirmed his country's refusal to continue regional conversations until Nicaragua withdraws its world court case. In December, a group of Honduran congressmen proposed to exclude Nicaragua from the parliament, and two weeks ago Honduran congressional president Carlos Orbin angered Guatemalan officials by comparing Guatemala's neutrality with an "ostrich hiding its head" from the danger of Nicaragua.

"I fear Vice President Carpio will return from his regional tour empty-handed," Congressman Edmond Mulet from the Guatemalan Congressional Foreign Relations Commission told *In These Times*. "When the U.S. and the other Central American countries see the need to dialogue with Nicaragua, then the parliament will work."

To that end, Guatemala's congressional delegations will also visit Honduras and Costa Rica and attempt to convince them to negotiate the elimination of Nicaragua's world court demand directly with the Sandinistas.

Guatemala hopes to solicit European political and economic support for the parliament at this week's EEC-Central America conference. A substantial increase in EEC multilateral aid to Central America is expected, including loans, donations and favorable commercial treaties for Central American exports to EEC countries.

And political overtones will clearly accompany any economic accords. Said Antonio Argueta, Guatemala's public relations official in charge of hosting the visiting delegations, "The overriding objective is to obtain peace in Central America as a base for economic and social development in the area."

—Kevin Robinson

Star Wars: the pope's got the dope

Two years ago a Vatican-appointed academy of 70 scientists began studying the feasibility of Star Wars (Strategic Defense Initiative, in official mumbo-jumbo). They came to the unanimous conclusion that Star Wars is "unworkable and a serious stumbling block to disarmament," according to the *National Catholic Reporter* (January 30). But so far Pope John Paul II has refused to publicly release the academy's July 1985 report. To that end Pax Christi USA, a Catholic peace group, has initiated a post-card-writing campaign. Apparently one of the few people to have seen the "strongly critical" study—the 70 authors never received their copy—was President Reagan who, according to the *National Catholic Reporter*, "immediately dispatched various emissaries to Rome to halt publication."

"My fellow surviving Americans..."

Fight, win and survive: the Reagan administration is still busy figuring out how it can do all three once a nuclear war gets started. According to Donald Goldberg, a staff investigator for the syndicated Jack Anderson column, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is preparing the nation's radio broadcasters for nuclear attack. (A similar version of Goldberg's story appeared in *Channels of Communication* January 1987.) The Commission's new plan is code-named "The Last Resort." "Last Resort" calls for the commission to identify 30 to 40 commercial stations in remote locations across the country where antenna and electronic systems will be protected against a nuclear blast, enabling them to transmit White House messages to what's left of the nation. "The Last Resort" was quietly readied in the wake of a 1986 FCC investigation that discovered the U.S. Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) has virtually no chance of surviving a nuclear war. (The impetus behind that 1986 investigation of emergency communications was White House fury at the fact that when Marcos fell last February Washington lost contact with the U.S. Embassy in Manila.) EBS—familiar to most listeners as a tone followed by the words "This is only a test"—relies on a network of local and regional broadcasters to relay presidential messages in case of a national catastrophe. But many of these stations are located near large urban areas and are consequently not expected to exist in the post-nuclear world. The new plan calls for significantly strengthening the towers of selected stations and protecting solid-state equipment against the electromagnetic pulse that follows a nuclear blast. According to an FCC official, the supposedly "low-risk" broadcasters selected can cover up to 85 percent of the population. Of course, after a nuclear war that percentage would shrink dramatically. Carl Loughry, president of WFRB-AM and FM in rural Frostburg, Md., is one of the broadcasters who has already been contacted. Though Loughry plans to cooperate, he grumbles that the FCC hasn't appealed to anything but his patriotism: "There's no money in it for us, no nothing."

Sodomy as civil disobedience

A gay man in Norfolk County, Mass., recently wrote letters to his legislator and the governor protesting that state's sodomy law. The law, written more than 200 years ago, reads, "Who ever commits the abominable and detestable crime against nature, either with mankind or with a beast, shall be punished by imprisonment in the state prison for not more than 20 years." Having received no response, the man thought his letters were getting nowhere and decided to take direct action. He wrote the local police, telling them that he intended to break the sodomy law in his home at 8:00 p.m. on January 8. The man, who declined to be named, told his tale to Boston's *Gay Community News* (January 25). He begins, "Shortly after 8:00 p.m., the phone rang, and it was a policeman who began asking about the letter. I said that 'Yes, I wrote the letter, and I meant every word of it.' He said that he wanted to talk to me, and asked when I would be available to talk. I told him that I was engaging in my criminal activity and was having trouble getting aroused due to the circumstances. The officer eventually said he would come by at 9:00 p.m." Two policemen arrived at the man's house at 9:15 p.m. and began interrogating him. The story ends this way: "The police finally said that they were never going to break into my bedroom to see what I was doing, regardless of what I said or wrote.... They nonetheless maintained that they would uphold the law and make arrests if they saw an act in progress, and that if I wanted to be arrested, I would have to come down to the station and perform an act in front of them."

A report on U.S. race relations: all is not quiet on the home front

By Salim Muwakkil

DURING THE MONTH SET ASIDE TO acknowledge African-Americans' historical legacy, increased attention is being focused instead on the present state of race relations. Events of recent weeks, including a series of racial incidents punctuated by the second national observance of the holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, have illustrated just how much work remains to be done on his well-known dream.

While there is no clear consensus that racism—as a professed belief-system—has increased (although the number of organized groups professing racist and neo-Nazi ideologies has increased), there is general agreement that overt displays of racism are finding greater social acceptance, especially among white youths. Publications spanning various spectra from the black-owned *Chicago Defender* to the *Wall Street Journal* to the *Village Voice* have all issued stormy forecasts on the national racial climate.

Evidence of this disturbing trend is showing up among urban, working-class ethnics—like those in the mob that assaulted three men in New York's Howard Beach—and among rural, good-ol'-boys like those in Forsyth County, Ga., whose threatening actions forced an interracial group of marchers to cancel marching plans. College students, including those in many of the more prestigious schools, also have been caught in the tow of this reactionary current.

In fact, there may be no better way to discover the specifics of this new sensibility than to peruse one of the conservative student publications that have proliferated wildly in recent years. The combative, aggressively non-apologetic tone of these publications all but spell out the unofficial credo of what some term neo-racism: the white guilt trip is over. White racism is no longer acceptable as an excuse for black underachievement and crime. Stringent law enforcement—even vigilanteism—and international counterrevolution are in. Affirmative action and "Third World romanticism" are out.

A desire to express overt racism is probably less important to the students who share this new attitude than is a desire to be intellectually audacious and contrarian. And since so many of the new right-wing publications and the student groups affiliated with them project the image of prankish adversaries to a stuffy "liberal establishment," they come across as adventurist, iconoclastic and alluring. The students attracted to them are strikingly similar to those many students of the '60s who became infatuated with the fugitive charms of ideology. And in much the same way, the philosophies of the right are providing them with as much intellectual protein as the philosophies of the left did for the idealists a generation earlier.

Ideological entropy: With the exception of the esoteric field of literary criticism, where Deconstruction has stirred some excitement, the left has been philosophically moribund for almost two decades. This lack of ideological vitality is most clearly manifested in the left's political stagnation. Meanwhile, the doctrines of political conservatism, which were being carefully honed by well-funded, conservative think tanks, have acquired a certain philosophical cachet.

BLACK AMERICA

The word 'crisis' is becoming appropriate as a description for increasing aspects of African-American life. There are crises in black housing, the black family, education, health and unemployment. In the wake of the Reaganization of the Democratic Party, black politics is also in a state of crisis. Racial incidents of recent weeks indicate that the word 'crisis' may aptly describe contemporary race relations.

George Gilder, one of the most rhapsodic theorists of the conservative movement, capsulizes the dilemma well with this observation from his book *The Spirit of Enterprise*: "The strange effort to subject the mind to the laws of matter" (what Gilder calls the materialistic fallacy of the left) "ironically comes at a time when physicists are emancipating matter from its Newtonian constraints." In other words dialectical materialism doesn't square with the insights gained from quantum physics.

But the mood inspired by this romance with conservative theory, and the attempt to translate the philosophy into practical applications, often results in behavior that these days can best be described as Ramboesque. And since such behavior clashes so fiercely with the social expectations and pent-up needs of an African-American community recently released from a history of racist subjugation, increased confrontations between these two groups were inevitable. What's more, the social anxieties generated by this increased tension have hastened the incorporation of conservative philosophy into racist polemics.

Thus a conservative "action of principle" that a group of right-wing students at Dartmouth University used to justify the demolition on their campus of several shanties—erected to symbolize abhorrence of South African apartheid—can provoke by its example an ugly racist incident on the neighboring campus of the University of Massachusetts, in which black students—who symbolized the World Series Champion New York Mets—were attacked by white fans of the losing Boston Red Sox.

And speaking of Boston, both the Sox and the Celtics are the Great White Hopes of their respective leagues. In spite of the team's black coach, the Celtic organization is seen by many as the Bernhard Goetz of the NBA. The officials in the Celtics' front office are certainly aware of their team's peculiar status and they mount an aggressive "affirmative action" program to locate and recruit hot, white hoopsters. If anyone dare question this implicit bow to racism, all the Celtic brass need do is point to the bottom line: financial profit is a high conservative value.

The occasional confluence of conservative ideology and racism has often caused problems, leading many to link the two. The increased focus on the past during observances of Black History Month reveals clearly how the two have been linked in this country. Throughout U.S. history conservative doctrine has urged less federal authority and increased rights for states. For blacks, states' rights initially was a codeword for slavery. After slavery's abolition, the concept became a rationale for the perpetuation of Jim Crow laws in certain states. In fact, African-Americans did not enjoy full rights as U.S. citizens until 1964, when the federal government passed the Civil Rights Act.

Although the convergence of conservatism and racism is neither inevitable nor inextricable, African-Americans have long feared that the election of a truly conservative president would remove a powerful constraint against public exhibitions of racism. As the Reagan era nears its end, there's ample evidence that those fears were justified. Not only have the Reaganites withdrawn from the struggle for racial harmony, but their tense economic policies have greatly expanded the growth of the black urban underclass. This underclass, culturally handicapped by self-hatred and poverty, has added an explosive element to the social mix. Jonathan Rieder, author of an upcoming

book on ethnic neighborhoods, phrased it best in a recent piece in the *New Republic* when he wrote, "This is perhaps the cruelest of the ironies imposed on the poor: they generate the very incivilities that diminish the will to help them."

The culpability question: This tense racial climate could easily be blamed on the neo-conservative intellectuals who have both reinvigorated the conservative movement and, perhaps inadvertently, lent respectability to racists' rantings. But, in fact, their culpability is more coincidental than intentional. And although this may spare them any direct responsibility for Howard Beach, Forsyth County, et al., such incidents force them to make revisions in their judgments about the nature of U.S. race relations.

Much of the current attraction of conservatives' (both neo- and paleo-) arguments begins with their dogged assurance that the U.S. is a color-blind society. The political isolation and antagonism conservatives suffered during the late '50s to the late '60s was due largely to their image as war mongers and racists. Glenn Loury, one of the most prolific and articulate black neo-conservatives, reiterated the importance of this, writing in a recent edition of *Commentary*. Implicit in his philosophy, Loury wrote, "is a perception of America as, on the whole, a decent and generous people, believing in fair play and, despite a past history of racism and discrimination, now ready to welcome individuals of all races and creeds to make of their freedoms what they will."

Thus, the open racism on display in Forsyth County and Howard Beach embarrassed the neo-conservatives most of all. The necessary illusion that the populace practices a benign cultural pluralism and believes in racial "fair play" cannot be maintained while blacks are being bludgeoned by bats or bombarded by empty moonshine bottles. That helps explain why New York City's neo-conservative Mayor Ed Koch reacted with such hyperbolic condemnation of the Howard Beach incident, and why Sen. Sam Nunn (D-GA), darling of the Democratic Leadership Council, joined a raucous crowd of more than 25,000 people to express displeasure with Forsyth County's citizens.

Milking the crisis: "This is the most fired up the black community in New York City has been in some time," says Jitu Weusi, national secretary of the Black United Front and a long-time Brooklyn organizer. He welcomes the change as a "new mood of activism." Weusi is candid in his contention that such crises should be milked for what-

ever energy they can provoke. Like others who share his philosophy of black nationalism, he sees the Howard Beach hoopla as an opportunity to jolt the black community out of what he calls a "decadent lethargy."

The nationalists have been mercilessly criticized in the mainstream and left press—including *In These Times* (Jan. 21)—for demagoguing the issue. Some of that criticism is merited, but much of it misses the point. For example, a recent editorial in the *New Republic* chides the nationalists for stirring up the troops. "The rhetoric and rituals of black extremism are not relevant to the crises of the black community. Rather, they are dangerously counterproductive." The editorial then outlines the sundry "pathologies" of the black underclass, bemoans its plight and contends the social problems engendered by the underclass are being ignored. The editorial says all of this without once acknowledging that perhaps the only groups that have not ignored the black underclass have been the very nationalists it denounces.

The "culture of poverty" that the editorial argues "has taken on a life of its own" has been more effectively countered by the black nationalists than by any group other than the black church. The largest organization ever of lower-class blacks was Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. This black nationalist group strongly urged against its members accepting any welfare assistance and successfully uprooted the kinds of sociopathic behavior patterns so regularly identified with the underclass. Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam compiled a 40-plus-year record of character reform and rehabilitative success that had social agencies in awe.

The editorial suggests in a contrite tone that new efforts should be made to forge alliances between blacks and whites, yet fails to note the efforts of Rev. Jesse Jackson and the National Rainbow Coalition. Jackson frames the various racial incidents in the larger context of class. He argues that corporate greed pits working-class whites and blacks against each other. Howard Beach and Harlem, he says, "are two sides of the same devalued coin."

Jackson's stance demonstrates that he has achieved a new political maturity. Although events justify the black nationalists' righteous anger and offer a golden opportunity for major demagoguery, Jackson instead is forcing a focus on a much less visceral issue. This is a politically risky gesture for him and it illustrates his growing concern for a wider electoral embrace. Jackson and Koch, his

former arch-nemesis, agree on the need for a Kerner Commission-type national study to reappraise the problem of racism.

Extremist safety valves: Malcolm X, another black leader who is often discussed this time of the year—he was assassinated on Feb. 21, 1965—once conceded to a reporter's description of him as an extremist by saying, "I'm an extremist because black people are in an extremely bad situation." At the time most pundits, mainstream and left, assailed Malcolm as a demagogue who exaggerated the anger and distress within the black community. One year later, in 1964, Harlem exploded in the first of the big city racial rebellions of the '60s.

The only major change in the condition of the black community since Malcolm X explained his extremism is the increase of black-on-black crime. But blacks' crop of extremists has diminished rather than grown. Sure, there's Louis Farrakhan. But even Farrakhan's remarks have a temperate tone to them. Recently he and his erstwhile rival, Imam Warith D. Muhammad, embraced in a public gesture of reconciliation, and he's turned the Nation of Islam more toward an "orthodox" expression of Islam.

This lack of extremism as a "social safety valve" has some black theorists worried. Weusi, for example, fears the black community will turn more on itself without the emotional catharsis occasional doses of demagoguery provide. The notion that focused activism or extremist racial beliefs could stem the tide of self-destructive behavior within the black underclass is seldom explored by those with left-liberal biases. Many black observers, however, accept this notion as a given; that's one reason why blacks are not very insistent in their denunciations of people like Farrakhan.

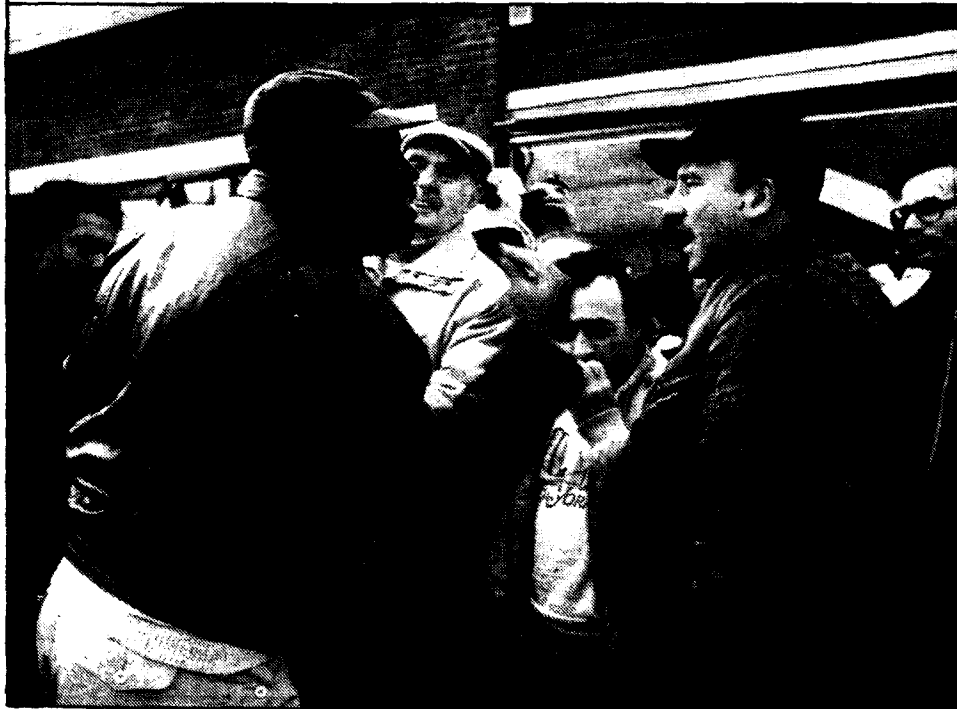
Mea culpa: The word "crisis" is becoming appropriate as a description for increasing aspects of African-American life. There's a black housing crisis, a black family, education, health and unemployment crisis. In the wake of the Reorganization of the Democratic Party, black politics is also in a state of crisis. The racial incidents of recent weeks indicate that the word crisis may also aptly describe contemporary race relations.

Among black organizers and intellectuals there's a broad consensus that the black community itself must become more intimately involved in ameliorating some of those crises. The logistical problems of how blacks will be able to turn toward their own strengths will become more important as the task becomes more insistent, but several approaches are already being studied. The one thing blacks can never do by pulling themselves up by their own bootstraps is control the way they are treated by the majority population. That was the primary lesson blacks learned from the recent racial incidents.

Most white organizers surveyed by *In These Times* agree that the incidents forced them to admit that they've been sensing an increase in racist feelings in recent years. White neo-conservatives—and black ones, too—should have learned to ease up on their prescription to withdraw the federal government as an advocate for the historically abused. Their collective illusion of a color-blind meritocracy needs some serious reality adjustments. The fear of the kind of social conflagration in which such incidents can escalate—a fear made palpable in New York City by a proliferation of retaliatory racial incidents during the dawning days of 1987—should convince all concerned to make some serious adjustments. □

IN THESE TIMES FEB. 11-17, 1987 7

The Howard Beach incident is one of several violent racial confrontations in recent weeks.



By David Moberg

THE DOLLAR'S RAPID FALL IN INTERNATIONAL money markets since late December is a giant shadow play, but a drama with real-life consequences. Its figures have been cast upon the screen partly by the reality of an untenably shaky world economy and partly by the subjective fears and political power plays of major protagonists.

After five years of what was generally considered a disastrously overvalued dollar, the Reagan administration abandoned its laissez-faire approach to exchange rates in 1985, and the leading industrial capitalist countries agreed to drive down the dollar. The latest plunge started in reaction to news of a continuing high U.S. trade deficit, which catalyzed increasingly jittery feelings about prospects for the dollar among major currency traders. It was deepened by reports that unnamed administration officials wanted the dollar to go even lower and, apparently, by failure of the U.S. to intervene to stop the fall rather than by any deliberate government action to precipitate it. In addition, real interest rates in Germany are now nearly the same as in the U.S., making it less appealing for foreigners to hold dollars.

Driving the dollar down served two political aims. The first was pushing Japan and Germany, which last year respectively ran huge trade surpluses of \$90 billion and \$50 billion while the U.S. ran up a record deficit of \$175 billion, to stimulate their economies and buy more U.S. products. The second was forestalling "protectionist" trade legislation by Democrats in Congress.

Classic problem: The U.S. trade deficit worried currency traders because it is obvious that such an imbalance cannot continue indefinitely, and the classic solution is to devalue currency, thus cutting imports and increasing exports. But so far that strategy has not worked very well. Last year U.S. imports were up, while exports remained constant. Some economists think that simply reflects a lag; eventually consumers will respond and buy fewer Japanese cars, French wines and German machine tools.

But others think that even though imports may have won a beachhead with lower prices, they now can hold a strong share because Americans see them as higher quality and will pay more for them. Also, in many areas, such as the vast expanse of consumer electronics, U.S. firms have abandoned the market. Indeed, in consumer electronics—as in many other fields—firms that are American in name are among the biggest importers. Although there is some shift of manufacturing to the U.S.—most notably Japanese auto and truck assembly plants—Japanese, U.S. and other firms are also moving even more to low-wage newly-industrialized countries. A stronger yen may simply mean more Korean cars instead of Japanese cars, not fewer imports.

Indeed, one reason the more than 40 percent devaluation of the dollar against the German mark and Japanese yen in the past two years has not cut the trade deficit is that increasingly imports are coming from countries like Taiwan, Mexico or Brazil, whose currencies are either tied to the dollar or have weakened in relation to the dollar. By one standard, the fully trade-weighted devaluation of the dollar has only been about 10 percent.

Another explanation for the weak effect is that foreign exporters, especially the Japanese, have absorbed deep cuts in profits or even losses in order to hold on to market

A cheap dollar is not the answer to trade deficits



share, since they are so heavily dependent on export markets.

But Treasury Secretary James Baker apparently hoped that another dose of the same quasi-ineffective medicine might stop Congress from passing legislation such as that which passed the House last year, mandating reductions in huge bilateral trade surpluses and offering protection for particular industries. The administration is also trying to pre-empt trade concerns by emphasizing job retraining, research and other general remedies for the pain of the trade deficit rather than the more targeted approach that many Democrats feel must be included.

December's preliminary trade figures were a boost for Baker after a demoralizing leap in the deficit in November, but the change appears idiosyncratic: many imports apparently were rushed to the U.S. in November to avoid a new customs fee on December 1. Looking at overall trends, the last half of 1986 looks slightly worse than the first half (when oil prices were still lower). And Germany and Japan's modest responses are unlikely to provide much relief. Indeed, both of those economies have been growing fairly strongly, but imports—especially from the U.S.—have not been growing fast.

Therein lies the rub: Although U.S. businesses continue to command roughly the same share of international trade, less and less originates from the U.S. itself. "The U.S., not American business, has become non-competitive because it's a high-wage country," says Michael Moffitt, a Wall Street investment adviser and author of *The*

World's Money. "Capital is perfectly mobile. Labor is not. American business is perfectly competitive at Korean wages."

Howard Wachtel, professor of economics at American University and author of the recent *The Money Mandarins*, says that increasingly U.S. business doesn't even try to compete in making things at U.S. wage rates—or any other. "A financial culture has taken over from the manufacturing culture," he says. "The service economy misses the point. We've become an economy that's learned to make a lot of money out of money, not even producing things or services. But it can't go on forever. Whenever we run a deficit, we have to create dollars or borrow money."

But if the dollar begins to drop, it could go into a free fall. Despite the debate about both over- and under-valuation, there is no agreed-upon standard. Last fall Baker apparently thought 160 yen to the dollar was right. Recently it fell to near 150. Some economists now say it would take 120 yen to the dollar to restore the balance of trade (assuming, contrary to recent evidence, that devaluation even works according to the old models). But there are those who argue the correct standard is relative purchasing power of a standard commodity. Thus *The Economist* wittily constructs its Big Mac index, how much it costs for a McDonald's hamburger in different countries. By such purchasing power standards, some economists like Ronald McKinnon of Stanford argue that the dollar is now woefully undervalued and should have stayed at 190 yen to the dollar.

But in the absence of a gold standard or the fixed exchange rates that were abolished in 1973, the market determines the value. Increasingly that market is dominated not by the major central banks, who conceivably could negotiate some fixed zone of variation of exchange rates as many experts now suggest should be done, but by private banks, corporations and investors who trade in currencies and shift deposits 24 hours a day with instantaneous results. Wachtel says that the movement of money around the world annually is now 25 times greater than the movement of goods and services, an indication that most currency transactions are now speculative (in recent years, indeed, one of the major sources of income in many corporations). It is this backdrop, Wachtel argues, that creates the possibility of a panicky dollar collapse in a short time. For nations to govern their economic relations, he says, they must regulate those international currency transactions more closely, perhaps putting a tax on purely speculative trading.

If the dollar collapses, the U.S. Federal Reserve will be under great pressure to raise interest rates in order to prevent a sudden flight of foreign capital that is increasingly underwriting not only the federal budget deficit, but also the huge expansion of credit in the U.S. Since a weaker dollar could also cause renewed inflation, the Fed may choose to tighten money and raise interests even without a panic.

False security: The world recovery has largely been sustained in recent years by this staggering increase in government, corporate and personal debt in the U.S., much of it of lower and lower quality—that is, higher risk. During the recent recovery, business failures, personal bankruptcies, mortgage foreclosures, bank collapses and other danger signals have been higher than in most recessions. If interest rates go up, the whole shaky structure of the U.S. economy is in jeopardy.

Not only that, higher interest rates would further the likelihood of default and collapse of Third World loans. In either case, there would be a real threat to the whole world financial system and obviously to world economic expansion. That would shrink everybody's markets, possibly igniting a mercantilist-protectionist combat unlike anything now in the offing.

Lee Price, an economist with the Senate Democratic Policy Committee, argues that Congress should take the following steps:

- Force banks to write off part of their Third World loans, thus making it possible for those countries to buy U.S. capital goods again;

- Establish some clear policy of exchange rates, such as announcing a target for exchange rates, much as the Federal Reserve does for interest rates; and

- Relax the extremely tight controls on exports of goods to the Soviet bloc countries as well as many European countries, such as Sweden and Austria.

Trade remedies will get more attention because they play better politically, but witnesses recently before the Joint Economic Committee estimated that the Democratic bill might provide only about \$15 billion relief.

Many economists pessimistically believe, as Price says, that "the \$170 billion deficit will only be cut by massive cuts in the American standard of living, and that will happen with the collapse of the dollar." The alternative? "Something politically unrealistic," Moffitt says, "providing global full employment." □

By Diana Johnstone

IF IT IS TRUE, AS IS SUGGESTED BY THE INCREASINGLY venomous articles in all those newspapers and magazines for whom NATO loyalty is a second only to faith in God, that former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt secretly longs for a future alliance between his Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party, then it must be acknowledged that he played the January 25 elections brilliantly.

The American Embassy and its many outposts have been watching like the hawks they are to head off the Red-Green pestilence. They were reassured by the choice of Johannes Rau as the SPD candidate for chancellor. Rau travelled to Washington as obediently as East German Communist Party leader Erich Honecker goes to Moscow, uttered the usual required pledges of allegiance to NATO and vowed never to share government with Greens. The world seemed safe.

But after the SPD's loss to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) last month (see *In These Times*, Feb. 4), it suddenly appeared obvious that the Rau candidacy was the best possible preparation for a Red-Green coalition next time around. By ruling out coalition with the Greens, Rau showed how the SPD could win a pat of approval from U.S. Ambassador Richard Burt but not an election. Rau's veto spared the Greens from having to resolve the split between their own *Fundis* and *Realos*, "fundamentalists" who reject compromise with the SPD and "realists" who favor government coalition with the SPD such as has already been set up in the state of Hesse.

Moreover, by running a vague, issueless campaign that scarcely mentioned the relatively bold program adopted by his party at its Nuremberg convention last August, Rau in effect saved the new "greenish" SPD program from the discredit of the election defeat.

Thus in a year when the international situation—that is, the attitude of the Reagan administration in particular—ruled out a turn to the left in West Germany, the conservative Rau candidacy proved to be a good holding action. It preserved the SPD's old base in Rau's industrial heartland of North Rhine Westphalia while enabling the Greens to grow and mature.

A new leader: The big post-election surprise was Rau's decision not to succeed Brandt as SPD chairman next year. Suddenly both party leadership and the 1990 candidacy for chancellor looked virtually sewed up for Oskar Lafontaine, the dynamic young prime minister of the Saarland and the SPD's strongest critic of nuclear power and NATO. Lafontaine's approach to coalition with the Greens is to force the Greens to make up their minds whether they want to be "realistic" enough to govern with the SPD or remain isolated in "fundamentalism."

The media's two favorite Greens are back in the new Bundestag, Petra Kelly as star *Fundi* and Otto Schily as top *Realo*. The Greens' most skilled public debater, lawyer Schily, was behind one of the few real accomplishments of the Greens in the last parliament. Despite more than their share of hard work, the Greens got only one bill adopted, an animal protection measure banning import of turtles. Schily, however, pushed an investigation into allegations of the big Flick holding company's payoffs to political parties as far as he could and much further than it would ever have been pushed



WEST GERMANY

Otto Schily is a leading Green "realist," who favors a coalition with the Social Democratic Party.

Political landscape in Red and Green

otherwise. Schily means to show how it is possible to stay honest and work with the SPD. Kelly, on the other hand, passionately opposes compromising Green principles by dealing with the SPD.

On a more left-wing political level, the *Realo-Fundi* debate is being carried on between Hesse sociologist Hubert Kleinert and Thomas Ebermann, a newly-elected parliament member from Hamburg, stronghold of the leftist (ultra-leftist, many would say) *Fundis* who came out of the dissolved Marxist-Leninist Communist League. In a pre-election debate in *Der Spiegel*, Ebermann said the Hamburg Green-Alternatives refuse to join the SPD in working out a waste-disposal program because they "want to provoke a trash emergency so as to stop the production of poisonous waste at the source."

Kleinert accused the Hamburg Greens of employing the vanguard tactic of constantly raising the ante not to get results but to "expose" the SPD so as to raise revolutionary consciousness.

Kleinert and Ebermann agreed on basic demands that must be put on an alliance with the SPD: immediate phasing out of nuclear technology, removal of Pershing II and cruise missiles, drastic cuts in weapons spending, no SDI and cancellation of the Wartime Host Nation Support agreement with the U.S., which allows the U.S. to use West Germany as a logistics base for whatever war it chooses to get into in the Third World.

The trend in the Greens is overwhelmingly toward the *Realo* view. However, for the Red-Green alliance to seem plausible the SPD must be more forthcoming than it has so far. In Hesse, the coalition is near total breakdown because of the SPD's failure to do anything to implement its declared opposition to the nuclear power industry.

In the wake of Chernobyl, Hesse Greens met last June and voted overwhelmingly to make continued coalition with the SPD in the state government in Wiesbaden contingent on concrete steps to shut down the nuclear power industry being taken in 1986.

Even Hesse environment minister, arch-*Realo* Joschka Fischer, voted for this ultimatum. Yet nothing has been done. The coalition is now on the verge of collapse over the license being granted to the ALKEM plutonium fuel plant in Hanau by SPD state economics minister, Ulrich Steger. The sincerity of the SPD's declared willingness to abandon nuclear technology is in doubt.

The *Realo-Fundi* debate between Kleinert and Ebermann showed that the real difference was less on program than on belief in the capacity of the SPD to evolve in the way it promised at its Nuremberg convention. The *Realos* want to try to enforce the "greenish" trend in the SPD, whereas the *Fundis* consider the SPD a dead duck and fancy that the Greens may eventually take its place.

Green power: The Greens' score of 8.3 percent of the vote in the recent election should be an encouragement to those in the SPD who take the Nuremberg program seri-

Of 44 Greens in the next Bundestag, 25 will be women, an unprecedented majority.

ously. The *Realo-Fundi* strife within the Greens is probably neither as bitter nor as unpredictable as the less-open struggle between the left and right wings of the SPD.

It can be argued that the ideological debate between *Realos* and *Fundis* is the least significant aspect of Green activity. Their main role is the practical job of raising awareness of a whole range of major contemporary issues neglected by the traditional parties.

To do this job, the Greens will have 44 representatives in the next Bundestag, 25 of them women. No other party has ever come near giving a majority of its representation to women.

Another characteristic feature of the

Green delegation is the high degree of specialized knowledge of a number of its representatives. Certain Greens in the next Bundestag are apt to know quite a lot more about specific issues of interest to the Greens—such as alternative energies, gene technology, waste disposal, nuclear power safety problems and alternative farming—than their colleagues from the traditional parties, who have more general backgrounds. The Greens also come to parliament with special knowledge of more general issues such as women's rights (several Bundestag Greens are experienced veterans of the women's movement), the problems of older people, Third World development and NATO strategy (former West German Col. Alfred Mechttersheimer has long headed his own peace research institute in Bavaria).

With their voting strength concentrated especially in modern urban centers and the younger age brackets, the Greens seem to have a future. Their energetic presence has at least succeeded in offering a way for West German yuppies to maintain some social and political conscience despite their California-style standard of living.

The U.S. and the German right are not going to sit back quietly in the face of the Red-Green threat. The first reaction of Kohl's CDU and Franz Josef Strauss' Christian Social Union (CSU) to their disappointing election results was to blame each other. On live TV, Bavarian boss Strauss pulled a monumental temper tantrum that delighted all his many political enemies. Günther Rohrmoser, a right-wing thinker close to Strauss, believes that the advent of the Greens to the left of the SPD requires a "balancing to the right" by the creating of a new force to the right of the CDU. An old threat is being revived of making Strauss' Bavarian CSU into a nationwide party that would compete with the CDU on its right. The "steel helmet" rightist faction of the CDU is using this threat to strengthen its own bargaining power in the new Kohl government.

The right may soon be having *Realo* and *Fundi* problems of its own. □

Israel

Continued from page 3

Pollard spy case. After Jonathan Pollard and his wife Ann-Marie Henderson Pollard were arrested and charged with espionage, the Israeli government denied any connection to them.

But when federal officials produced evidence to the contrary, the Peres government sheepishly acceded to Justice Department requests to allow FBI agents to inspect Mossad files. Never before had an intelligence agency voluntarily allowed another to do this, and by last spring a humiliated and outraged Mossad was convinced that the Reagan administration was out to get it. Mossad also believed the Peres government was becoming increasingly subservient to U.S. interests.

So Northrop refused to go to New York, and Hashemi suggested that the Israelis come to Bermuda instead. Then Hashemi tipped off the U.S. Customs Department. At U.S. Customs' request, Bermuda authorities arrested Northrop, Evans and their companions when they landed on the island.

There was still the delicate business of getting the incarcerated men into the U.S., however. Bermuda is a Crown Colony of Great Britain, and theoretically the detainees should have been returned to England. Nevertheless, after the Justice Department pressured the Bermuda government through the office of Max Friedersdorf, the ex-White House aide who is the American Consul on the island, the Israelis were expelled—arguably illegally—into U.S. custody. They were immediately flown to New York and spent several weeks in jail before being released to await trial on conspiracy charges.

Once in custody several of the defendants

publicly alleged that they were working in conjunction with the U.S. and Israel. The Peres government, in now familiar terms, denied any knowledge of the defendants or their arms deal, and U.S. prosecutors began pressing their case. Edwin Meese's subordinates, in other words, indicted the Israelis for trying to do exactly what the attorney general himself was secretly doing.

Why did Meese decide to arrest the Israelis? Because the field of people trying to sell American arms to Iran was getting too crowded, and, according to Israeli sources, because Meese and other members of the National Security Council had no intention of letting U.S. arms be marketed for Israeli prisoners. (According to Israeli sources, the attorney general conveyed this message to the Peres government during a trip he made to Israel last year, just weeks after Northrop and his friends were arrested.) Furthermore, the Reagan administration was confident Jerusalem would deny any connection to the Israelis—after all, they'd bowed to U.S. bullying in the past.

Surprise, surprise: What Meese didn't count on was Mossad's loyalty to its agents. In addition to Northrop, the Israeli detainees included Avraham Bar-Am, a retired general who had served heroically in several of Israel's wars and who had held major posts in the military branch of his country's government. The two other Israelis were R. Israel Eisenberg and his son, Guri, prominent Jerusalem businessmen with close connections to Israel's defense establishment.

There was no way Mossad, still fuming over the Pollard affair, was going to watch its government cut these men loose. So there was only one solution: to expose the secret U.S.-Israeli participation in the Iranian arms sales, and thereby legitimize Northrop and

his men. The Israeli people wouldn't care since they supported their government's ties to Iran. Only the U.S. administration would feel the heat.

Because the Peres government was still in power at the time of the Bermuda arrests, Mossad had to bide its time. Shortly after the conservative Yitzhak Shamir became prime minister, however, the Israelis planted the story in Beirut, and made it look like it came from the Iranians, according to Israeli intelligence sources. (Friends of the Israeli defendants counted on no one questioning the source, since few in the U.S. expect the Iranians to act rationally.)

It was a brilliant piece of counter-counterespionage: the Israelis burned their own cover to save their men, and let Meese and his fellow White House staffers take the rap. When the arms scandal broke, the Reagan administration and its friends in Congress tried to portray themselves as well-meaning but gullible victims of an Israeli plot. Sen. David Durenberger (R-MN) went so far as to tell the media that the administration had been the victim of "somebody else's foreign policy." No one believed this, but it did confirm Mossad's impressions about the U.S. administration's loyalty to its closest ally in the Mideast.

There is an epilogue: Cyrus Hashemi died in London last July after a brief, mysterious illness. Northrop and the others are scheduled to stand trial in May, although the federal prosecutor no longer seems in any rush to try them, and the judge has lowered their bail and is considering dismissing the case. The administration's current problems are the stuff of headlines.

As for Mossad, it is perhaps wondering what piece of embarrassing information it will have to leak to get the Pollards free. An

Israeli intelligence officer recently summed up Mossad's feelings about its abandoned spies this way: "For a government to turn its back on its own spy, that is something burglars do. To sacrifice a Jew in trouble anywhere for expedience sake is horrendous; it betrays the fundamental principles on which Israel was founded.... Not a day goes by without many people in this country thinking of the Pollards."

Since the U.S. and Israel have historically left each other's agents alone, perhaps the administration will do the gracious thing, and let the Pollards slip quietly off to Israel.

It's clear that U.S.-Israel relations have deteriorated to a dangerous point. In the past few years each country has pursued the same policy—selling arms to Iran—for conflicting reasons, and each now appears to have been wary of the other's ultimate goals.

Had the U.S. and its ally conducted their foreign policy publicly, this crisis might have been avoided. As a senior member of Israel's conservative Likud party told *In These Times*, "[The Americans and Israelis] should have been open about their dealings with Iran from the start. In democracies you need such openness, and two friends can afford to be honest with each other."

Clearly, it is too late for the Reagan administration to learn this lesson. What is also clear is that behind the seemingly impenetrable haze of events surrounding the Iranian arms deal lie real and accessible motivations and institutional interests. The account of the administration's betrayal of Mossad, and Mossad's eventual retaliation, evokes the classic themes of human affairs: duplicity is still duplicity, loyalty is still loyalty, revenge is still revenge.

Richard Ryan is the Washington correspondent for the *Texas Observer*.

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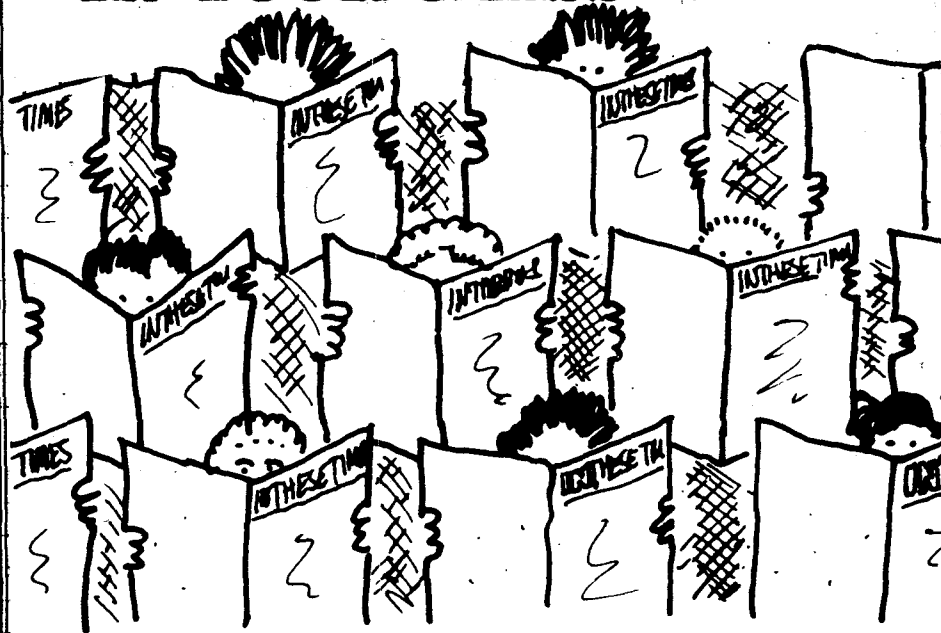
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By James B. Goodno

MANILA

ALTHOUGH FILIPINOS APPROVED A NEW constitution on February 2, the nation remains in crisis. During the two weeks prior to the plebiscite, 18 left-wing demonstrators were killed near the presidential palace, a military mutiny had to be contained and peace talks with the Communist-led National Democratic Front (NDF) collapsed.

An early estimate shows nearly 80 percent of Philippine voters approved the constitution, and its ratification will help the government of President Corazon Aquino. But Aquino still must decide if she will strike an alliance with the right and defend the social and economic status quo or work with left-wing elements to further the "revolution" that swept her to power one year ago.

"We promised to restore democracy," said Vice President Salvador Laurel during the final pro-constitution rally here. "This charter is the fulfillment of our promises to you."

Added Aquino, "Those who are in the left and right are few. We can easily handle them."

The middle ground that Aquino so proudly occupies is a center of convenience rather than ideology. It includes right-wing technocrats and financial interests, a segment of the military and its foreign backers, liberals, Social Democrats and a small and not very influential number of independent left-leaning nationalists. These "centrists" share the belief that the Aquino government can somehow serve their interests.

From the start Aquino's coalition has been tilting toward the right and the traditional economic and political elite. Yet although Aquino is a conservative, she has tried to balance contending interests both inside and outside the government. More often than not, this balancing act has led to a paralysis that, perhaps as much as the conscious efforts and successes of the coalition's right wing, has contributed to the administration's slide to the right and its failure to act as an instrument of change.

Despite the government's rightward drift, the far right has not been satisfied. It opposes the government's attempts to cooperate with any part of the left, even the non-Communist left. It wants the entire left eliminated.

Underestimation: When Aquino says "the left and the right are few," she downplays the importance of both groups. During the fight against former President Ferdinand Marcos' autocracy, the left won significant support from the country's peasants, workers, urban poor, minorities and intellectuals. It has maintained this support during the past year because of its consistent opposition to political and economic injustice and elite rule.

And the far right is well entrenched in the armed forces and the traditional political parties. It could gain ground with rightists in the current ruling coalition if the Aquino government appears to tilt to the left. The ratification of the constitution, however, makes such a right-wing defection less likely in the near future.

The recent mutiny in the New Armed Forces of the Philippines (NAFP) and the handling of it by the military leadership demonstrated the depth of the far right's influence in that institution. Though Marcos supporters were named as the leaders of the revolt, the concerns raised by the dissidents are shared by a cross-section of non-mutinous soldiers and officers.

"Marcos is no longer the issue," said a

Aquino gets vote of confidence in the most uncertain of times



THE PHILIPPINES

Approval of a new constitution gives Corazon Aquino reason to smile, at least for now.

junior officer who joined the latest uprising, which military officials ask be called an "unauthorized military operation." He added, "The issue is Communism."

Mutinous military men tried to rally the public and the armed forces to their cause. But public support was not forthcoming—in fact, public criticism was. Yet they did become something of a rallying point for dissent in the military.

"Maybe the government should listen to their complaints," said a colonel serving the government in a non-military post. When asked about the dissidents' methods, the colonel replied, "Maybe it was the only way they had of being heard."

There is suspicion that the revolt—which involved a series of coordinated attacks on military bases and communications facilities—was broader-based than it at first appeared. A government official who requested

anonymity suggested that former Minister of National Defense Juan Ponce Enrile and members of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) were involved in the plot.

Left-wing groups say NAFP Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos was also involved. The banned

The crisis remains, despite the constitution's passage.

NDF and the legal Party of the People (PNB) claim that Ramos is involved in a CIA-engineered plan either to force the Aquino government to rid itself of any leftist taint, neutralize the legal left and launch a counterinsurgency campaign along the lines of the "low intensity warfare" now being fought in Central America, or face replacement by a

military-civilian junta. They suggest that Ramos and his co-conspirators are using pocket revolts to pressure Aquino.

Even if these theories prove false, RAM and Enrile, along with Ramos and current Defense Minister Rafael Ileto, will probably use the revolt to promote their own right-wing agenda. RAM is likely to exploit the soldiers' dissatisfaction to continue building its organization. And Ramos will use his standing as the suppressor of military plots to promote a more aggressive and far-reaching counterinsurgency program. Now that the peace talks have collapsed he may succeed in this goal.

The last straw: The killings of 18 demonstrators on January 22 at Mendiola Bridge, the main approach to Malacanang Palace, precipitated the current crisis. The events hardened the position of those on the left who focused on the negative aspects of the Aquino government and its proposed constitution. The killings galvanized left-wing opposition to the NAFP and the government's failure to reform it. They also were the last straw that preceded the NDF's breaking off of peace talks.

"All our hopes for a just peace died at Mendiola," wrote the NDF in its announcement of its pulling out of the talks. "The Mendiola massacre is the darkest hour of the Aquino government.... On the road to Mendiola, the bullets and brutality fatally wounded the current efforts for peace in the country."

Yet the peace talks seemed doomed even before Mendiola. NDF constituent organizations and regional councils were complaining about the government's unwillingness to compromise. These groups were calling for the national NDF to withdraw from the talks before the 10,000 mostly peasant demonstrators began their fateful march on January 22 toward the palace.

Not only the NDF was disillusioned with the peace talks. Government negotiator Maris Diokno and the members of the secretariat that she headed resigned following the massacre, saying it was becoming "increasingly difficult to defend" the government's positions. Diokno's statement appeared to reflect the frustration of other left-leaning government officials irked by the government's drift to the right.

That drift has already led many leftists to conclude that Aquino stands in the way of progress and that her government is now an impediment to the revolution that brought her to power.

Ironically, however, recent events have given Aquino a new opportunity—perhaps her last chance—to place herself on the side of social change. Shortly after the killings, she agreed for the first time to meet with leaders of the peasant group that marched to the palace, raising hopes that she will finally sign into law a much-needed land reform program.

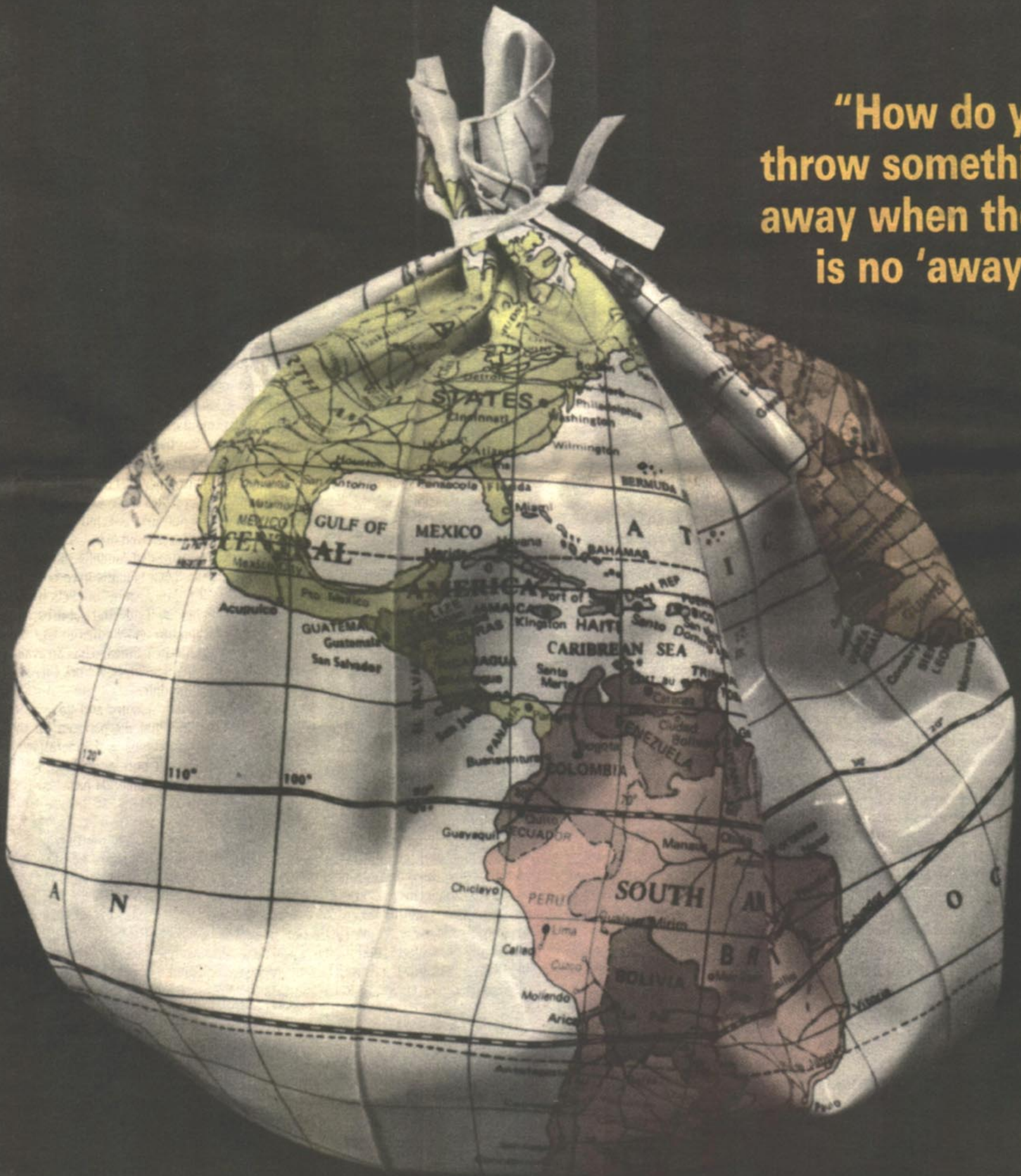
If Aquino does not use the mandate from the constitution's ratification to implement land reform and re-orient the armed forces, then it will become clear that she has not simply drifted to the right, but has chosen to stand with her country's traditional powers. □

James B. Goodno is *In These Times'* correspondent in the Philippines.

IN THESE TIMES FEB. 11-17, 1987 11

Garbage-bag Earth

"How do you
throw something
away when there
is no 'away'?"





By Richard Asinof

WHAT WILL BE THE FOCUS OF THE NEXT major populist movement to sweep across the American political landscape? Garbage, predicts Lisa Bunin, the former director of Greenpeace's toxics campaign.

In the past four years, Bunin traveled to hundreds of American cities to meet with local community organizers and aid them in their efforts to investigate pollution. Whatever the toxic threat—ocean incineration, deepwell injection, Superfund waste dumps awaiting cleanup—she has dealt with it.

In her opinion, the fight against trash-burning incinerators is where the action is. "The movement is bigger than anyone imagined," she says.

Increasingly, communities have no place to dispose of their trash. Landfills are filling to capacity and stricter guidelines make new ones harder to site as their environmental effects emerge; all landfills leak, seeping toxic residue into the groundwater. "To the public, it's not a question of lack of space or more regulation," Bunin says. "It's a question of 'Can I drink my water?' and 'Can I plant crops in my yard?'"

Landfilling was once the cheapest method of trash disposal. But as landfills close or are forced to shut down, communities are paying exorbitant "tipping fees"—the price dump owners arbitrarily set for the right to use their landfill.

The U.S. now produces 165 million tons of commercial and residential garbage a year, according to the National Solid Wastes Management Association, and that amount is increasing by 2 percent a year, roughly in line with population growth. Thus by the year 2000 there will be almost twice as much garbage as there was in 1980.

The government's solution, Bunin complains, is to burn the trash rather than look for ways to reduce the amount of disposable goods entering the waste stream. The incineration industry—euphemistically called the "resource recovery" industry—has been promoted as the answer to the landfill crisis.

New York City, for instance, plans to build five massive trash incinerators, one in each of the city's five boroughs. The first, at the former site of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, will burn 3,000 tons of garbage a day, making it the world's largest trash incinerator. With only one major landfill left, New York's Department of Sanitation views incineration as the only choice.

But environmental critics like Bunin see it as jumping from the alligator pit to the crocodile pond. Incinerators, they claim, spew out toxics into the air instead of allowing them to seep into the ground. These claims are backed up in part by a 1984 study by the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG). It found that more than 700 toxic chemicals were emitted by garbage-burning plants. Worse, incinerators don't end the need for landfills, because the ash has to be buried somewhere, according to NYPIRG. And ash—highly contaminated with heavy metals and toxic chemicals, when buried in a solid waste landfill—turns a landfill into a toxic waste dump.

According to Bunin, the trash-burning plants, with a lifetime expectancy of a mere 20 years, are a short-term solution that postpones looking for a more viable, low-tech, long-term answer, such as recycling, source separation and waste reduction. But instead of promoting recycling, the federal government plans to allow even more unrecyclable plastic to enter the packaging market, aggravating the situation.

The fight against plans to build garbage incinerators is creating a new generation of community activists and coalitions, much as the anti-nuclear movement did in the '70s. And proof of their effectiveness can be found in the unlikely place of Holyoke, Mass., an aging industrial center along the Connecticut River, where a local citizens' group recently won a precedent-setting victory over a planned trash-burning incinerator.

Holyoke's development has been ruled by industry since its earliest days, when the Hadley Falls Co. laid out the city's boundaries in the 1830s. Today its block-long brick factories and its extensive network of canals still resemble those of an early 19th century factory town.

It must have seemed that one more smokestack would hardly be noticed. Or at least that's what commercial landfill magnate Joseph Partyka probably believed when he announced plans in 1984 to site a \$93 million, 685-ton-a-day garbage-burning plant there. The Holyoke Energy Recovery Corp. (HERCO) was to service many of the communities which used Partyka's landfills to dump their trash. And Partyka had most of those small western Massachusetts communities dancing to his tune when he gave the local town governments a difficult choice: either sign a 20-year contract to join the HERCO project or be forced to pay larger tipping fees for use of his landfills. Reluctantly, 14 communities signed on.

The Holyoke Board of Health approved the HERCO site and, despite an appeal by a local citizens' group, it seemed unlikely that the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQE) would turn down an incinerator at a time when the commonwealth was grappling with a dire lack of landfill space in which to dispose of its trash. More than 300 landfills had been closed down by DEQE's orders in recent years, and only four new "virgin" landfills had been permitted to open since 1980.

But the DEQE, in a landmark decision last November 20, turned down a site permit in Holyoke for the HERCO project. Emissions from the incinerator would create too great a health risk for the city's population, which is already burdened with high rates of pulmonary disease and elevated levels of lead in children, ruled DEQE regional environmental engineer John Higgins.

According to Carole Horowitz, a leader of Citizens for a Quality Environment, the local group that challenged the facility, two other factors contributed to the permit's denial: the city's high infant mortality rate and recently released statistics by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health showing higher than normal cancer rates in Holyoke and the surrounding communities of Chicopee, South Hadley and Granby.

Horowitz's group presented hundreds of pages of written documents and hours of oral testimony at the DEQE hearing. Horowitz railed against what she called "the deceptive approach" of industry and government officials. "They wanted us to believe that the only choice we had was between an incinerator and a landfill, but it wasn't true," she says.

The decision to deny HERCO a permit for its Holyoke site was not an indictment of resource recovery technology, according to DEQE's Higgins. Rather, he says, it was a judgment that Holyoke was a singularly poor site for such a trash-burning facility. HERCO, in turn, has announced its intention to appeal the decision.

The permit's denial has sent tremors throughout the resource recovery industry. It sets a precedent that a trash incinerator site might be rejected for health reasons if there is an at-risk population—something that could be said of most urban centers.

In Connecticut, for instance, where state environmental officials are promoting resource recovery plants as the answer to the lack of landfill space, the Holyoke situation is being watched carefully. With the \$157 million Mid-Connecticut trash-burning facility in Hartford nearing the halfway point in construction, questions abound about whether Hartford has an at-risk population in regard to the projected 14.4 tons of lead the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) estimates will be emitted each year from the plant. A 1984 survey by state health officials found that Hartford had the highest incidence of elevated lead levels in pre-school children in the state.

Although Connecticut is conducting a \$40,000 risk assessment of dioxin emissions from trash-burning plants, Leonard Bruckman, director of the DEP's air compliance division, told the *Hartford Courant* in December 1986—before the risk assessment was completed—that he was "confident" there are not going to be hazardous air emissions. There are no current plans to conduct similar risk assessments for heavy metal emissions, such as lead, according to state environmental officials.

All across America communities are confronting the dilemma of what to do with their garbage. As Ed Repa, manager of the solid waste disposal program at the National Solid Waste Management Association, an industry trade association in Washington, D.C., put it: "How do you throw something away when there is no 'away'?"

Since colonial days an out-of-sight, out-of-mind mentality has dominated each "better idea" for garbage disposal in the U.S. The first trash removal system in this country was designed by Benjamin Franklin and it was ingeniously American. To combat the filth and stench of garbage rotting in the streets of Philadelphia in the mid-1700s, Franklin had slaves carrying bins of garbage wade into the Delaware River and toss the trash into the currents, where it was swept away downstream.

The 20th-century dump was considered a vast improvement over Franklin's pioneering efforts. Located usually on the outskirts of town, it was the site where most communities "dumped" their trash. But as the piles of garbage mounted, the dumps became a breeding ground for vermin and disease. And so the "sanitary landfill" was developed in the '30s—the new, improved version of dumping—in which the offensive trash was bulldozed and then covered over with a layer of soil.

On the surface, the landfill seemed a good idea: if you ran out of space, you could build a new one. There was a problem, though; when it rained hazardous materials in the garbage leached into the rainwater, which, in turn, percolated down into the groundwater. Over time, the landfill became like an open, festering sore, oozing deadly poisons into the ground.

In places like Long Island, N.Y., where groundwater is the primary source of drinking, bathing and cooking water for three million residents, toxic leachate from municipal dumps has created a serious health hazard. More than 70 public drinking wells have been shut down since 1975, and state environmental officials reported that landfills were a significant source of Long Island's groundwater contamination.

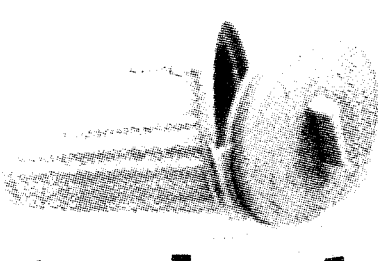
A 115-acre Old Bethpage Landfill in Oyster Bay, Long Island, for instance, leaches a host of toxic chemicals into the groundwater, including benzene and vinyl chloride. The landfill is on Superfund's national priority list for cleanup and was rated by New York's environmental officials in 1986 as one of the 10 worst sites in the state. Of the first 800 Superfund sites, 100 were municipal landfills, according to Dr. Henry S. Cole of the Clean Water Action Project in Washington, D.C.

Yet until the Old Bethpage Landfill was closed down by a court order in May 1986, it still received a daily load of about 850 tons of trash for burial.

Despite the inherent problems with landfills, more than 90 percent of the 165 million tons of what is known as "municipal solid waste" generated each year ended up in landfills in 1985, according to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency figures.

But the squeeze on landfill space in metropolitan areas has become severe. Strict environmental controls—mandated by the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, first enacted by Congress in 1976 and renewed in 1984—have forced thousands of landfills to shut down. More than 3,500 landfills have been closed since 1979. Los Angeles predicts it will run out of space by 1991; and suburbs are no longer willing to allow cities to use their land for dump sites. Chicago has no available site for a new landfill; New York City is down to its last landfill.

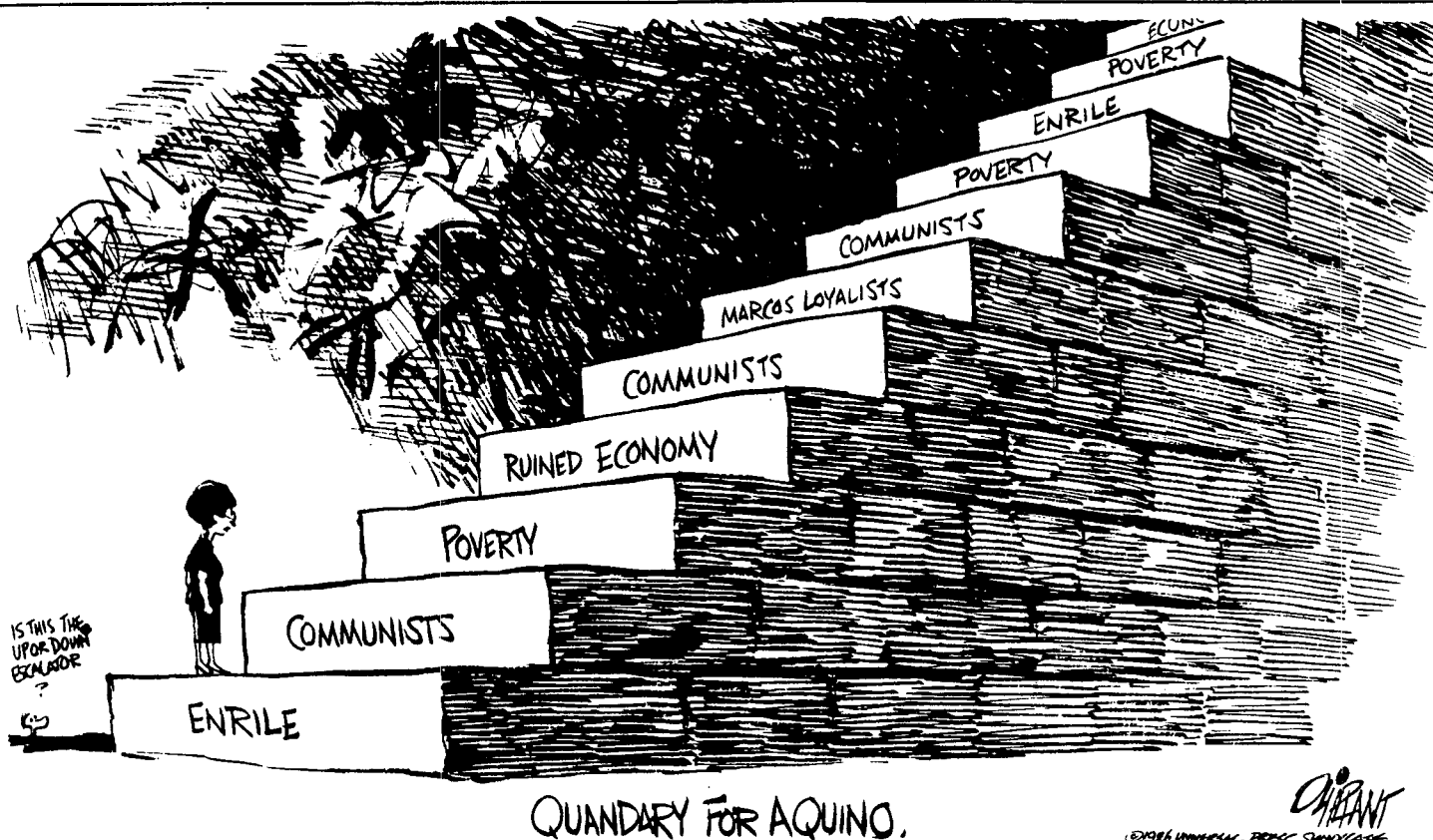
Many industry and government officials believe that the panacea for the country's garbage woes is incineration. But critics warn that burning garbage will only create new environmental hazards.



"Incineration, it's a growth industry," says Ed Davies, regional director of business development for Signal Environmental Services, Inc. He has just returned from leading a tour of Signal's Baltimore trash-to-energy facility for a group of officials from suburban Philadelphia who are interested in building a plant of their own. "We as a society have realized that throwing our waste products into the ground is polluting our groundwater and destroying our natural resources. Instead, with incineration," Davies says, "we are taking those waste products and convert-

Continued on page 22

EDITORIAL



QUANDARY FOR AQUINO.

Philippine election double standard

Threatened in recent days by a military coup against her government and shaken by popular outrage over the massacre of demonstrators at the presidential palace, Philippine President Corazon Aquino has won an overwhelming vote in favor of her nation's new constitution and extended her term of office until 1992. Now the question becomes what she will do with her legitimized power. From her Communist opposition to the editors of the *New York Times*, people are observing that, in the *New York Times*' words, the "clamor for change that gave her power" could "quickly take it away." As both the *Times* and the leaders of the National People's Army are asking, "How can we have genuine land reform where the people making the laws are the landowners?" That is, indeed, the right question. Only time will reveal the answer.

The Philippine election, overall, was about as democratic as one could hope for under the circumstances. Even so, it was a plebiscite, not a multiparty election. Aquino had no opponents and won a six-year term. And the pre-election days were marred by more killings in Manila than were suffered in all of former President Ferdinand Marcos' bloody rule. In that light, compare the press and TV coverage accorded Aquino and that given to the Nicaraguan elections in 1984. The Nicaraguans also had what was in effect a plebiscite ratifying the victory of their revolution. Given the circumstances there, it also was about as democratic as one could hope for. Indeed, unlike the Philippine election, the one in Nicaragua had several parties running. And it had considerably less violence and no killings by government troops in the days immediately before the election.

Yet the *New York Times* and the rest of the media treated the Nicaraguan election as fraudulent, dishonest, devious. In fact, the elections in Nicaragua clearly established the popularity of the Sandinista regime, but the press continues to write about that country as if it never had an election, and continues to endorse administration demands for "free" elections—by which it means elections that recognize the legality of the CIA-created contras. If the same standard were applied to the Philippines, of course, then the *Times* and its peers would now be condemning Aquino for failing to include the Communist-led forces in the election there.

But "objectivity," in the commercial media has never meant fairness or balance. It has only meant a policy of not questioning the principles and policies of our corporate elite.

Larry misSpeakes last time

Last week, after four years as White House misspokesman, Larry Speakes resigned to seek his fortune in greener pastures. He came into the job when President Reagan and his then-principal spokesman, James Brady, were shot in an attempted presidential assassination. He leaves after the president has shot himself in the foot. A senior administration aide said of Speakes in his early days that "he's not quite major league." Perhaps that's why he felt perfectly at

home in the White House infield, even when he was letting easy grounders slip through his legs.

Appeals court slaps Reagan

The activities of the Reagan administration National Security Council—and of the CIA—in circumventing both the law and the intent of Congress and the will of the American people are now being aired in the Irangate and contragate investigations. But it has been not only in foreign affairs that the administration has sought to frustrate the popular will and to circumvent the law. This was made clear on January 20, when a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia unanimously upheld a district court ruling that President Reagan wrongly deferred the spending of \$5.1 billion appropriated for fiscal 1986 for housing and related aid for low-income individuals. The case had been brought by the National League of Cities, individual cities and four House Democrats: Reps. Barbara Boxer (Calif.), Mike Lowry (Wash.), Bruce Morrison (Conn.) and Charles Shumer (N.Y.).

The issue of presidential "impoundment" of appropriated funds first came to a head in 1974, after President Nixon had infuriated Congress with numerous "impoundments" of appropriated funds. In response Congress had passed an Impoundment Control Act, placing limits on the president's authority to defer the spending of appropriated money. The act provided that either the House or the Senate could vote to cancel a deferral, but in 1983 the Supreme Court, in another context, nullified such "legislative vetoes" of presidential actions. To the Reagan administration lawyers, that appeared as a green light to take advantage of the limited deferrals allowed in the 1974 act. But the circuit court ruled that the now-defunct legislative veto was an integral part of the act. Congress would not have granted deferral authority in 1974, the circuit court found, without giving itself the check contained in the veto provision. Since the two are inseparable, deferral authority was also invalid.

Reagan's 1986 deferrals had provoked strong responses because he had done the same thing the previous year, only to have Congress reject his action. Imposing the deferrals for a second year in a row had the effect of cancelling programs Congress clearly wanted to continue, thereby achieving a selective, item veto—the very line veto that the president has been requesting since he took office, and that Congress has denied him.

Like the district court last May, the appeals court repeatedly slapped down administration arguments in favor of policy deferrals. Interestingly, Robert H. Bork, a leading judicial conservative was one of the judges on the panel issuing this decision. As Connecticut Rep. Morrison commented, the fact that Bork went along with this strong and straightforward decision "is an indication of how ridiculous the Justice Department position is." It is also an indication of how the current administration tries to get around the law when it stands in the way of Reagan's reactionary program.

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LETTERS

Still valid

IN "BLACK HOWARD BEACH RESPONSE FEEDS racism" (ITT, Jan. 21), Jim Sleeper seems more distressed by the victims' people's distraught, frenzied and intemperate outcries than by the original white racist, violent-to-the-point-of-causing-death, attack on three black victims!

He admits that, "Given the many beatings and murders of blacks over the past 10 years by New York whites—including white police officers—the city may not deserve better than Maddox's leadership." He understands that "The wild charges and contempt for white opinion voiced by black leaders after Howard Beach is a bitter new fruit of that long-festering transformation." Yet he considers ours "a city properly on guard against malfeasance..."! What he calls "some police foul-ups" seemed to the victims and their lawyer understandably a "cover-up."

The basis of Sleeper's confusion is that he tends to equate the victims' defensive, reactive racism with white racism, which is dominant and aggressive because it wields political power. The main target is white racism, not black nationalism—no matter what its rhetoric. To equate the two as both "forms of racism" is to confuse the identity of the main enemy. (Similarly, one should not equate Jewish "anti-goyism" with anti-Semitism). That is what "the left in New York" (read: the Communist Party) taught in the '30s. The lesson is still valid.

Morris U. Schappes
Editor, Jewish Currents

Clarity

I WAS SURPRISED TO READ IN *IN THESE TIMES* (Jan. 21) the jesuitic, double-talk article by Jim Sleeper, whose concern appears not to report the facts of the Howard Beach prosecution but to accuse militant blacks of distrusting white justice. Things got clear to me when at the end of the article I saw that Sleeper works for *Dissent*. His article reminds me of those in which the editor of that magazine, Irving Howe, used to damn the anti-Vietnam students in the 1960s. Underneath liberal "moderation" there's always a racist elitist streak.

Opposite Sleeper's article there was Alexander Cockburn's column. Thanks to Cockburn for telling some truth about the obnoxious Shcharansky, the pet of racists everywhere.

S.E. Luria
Cambridge, Mass.

Justifiable noncooperation

JIM SLEEPER (ITT, JAN. 21) WROTE THAT THE ATTORNEYS in the Howard Beach racial beating were wrong to withhold cooperation from authorities until a special prosecutor was appointed.

I disagree. I think the attorneys were right to doubt that justice would be done if this were handled by the good old boys of Queens. The Howard Beach cops have shown their true colors in this case. After numerous calls came into 911 of a vicious beating by a gang of whites chasing three black men, the cops picked up one of the victims, withheld medical treatment from him for three hours and tried to get him to confess to an unrelated robbery. Can you imagine the same thing happening to a

white man, bruised and bleeding, staggering through Harlem?

The police also failed to charge the driver who killed Michael Griffith with leaving the scene of a crime. The victims' attorneys are not the only ones who think the driver was handled with kid gloves because his father is a cop. This precinct has an illustrious history. Two years ago, cops from Howard Beach tortured black prisoners with stun guns.

I'm not normally into conspiracy theories, but in the case of Queens I'll make an exception. If Archie Bunker didn't put Queens on the map, Donald Manes, the borough's dear departed borough president, who killed himself as the New York City corruption scandal was beginning to unfold, certainly did.

I agree with Sleeper that the black community in New York is in sore need of leadership. Boycotting pizzerias, media-bashing and withholding evidence only serve to damage what's left of racial harmony in New York. On the other hand, I understand why the Howard Beach attorneys were desperate for an outsider to come in and handle this case. They simply felt there was no other way they could get a fair shake. And, given the history of the Howard Beach precinct and New York officials, I think they were right in taking the risk they did. If you know the system isn't going to work for you, sometimes you are more effective dropping out than by struggling along within it.

Beth Jackendoff
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Balmy Sadr

BANI SADR'S CONSPIRACY THEORIES ARE CHILDISH and self-serving (ITT, Jan. 21). Bani Sadr was the fool who thought he could ride the tiger, that Shi'ite traditionalism and clericalism could be used as a catalyst for anti-imperialist mobilization and would then meekly retire, leaving Islamic modernists in charge. But Bani Sadr can't be blamed for his failure if he was really up against an omnipotent gigantic conspiracy involving not only fanatical mullahs but also American global power, world capitalism, etc.

So losers like Bani Sadr have a natural affinity for elaborate conspiracy theories. Also attracted to such visions are some radicals whose quasi-religious needs compel them to believe in an ordered cosmos in which somewhere there is an omnipotent force which is manipulating everybody—a veritable Great Satan in control of everything! A third kind of conspiracy theory devotee is the crude economic determinist addicted to *cui bono* as the be-all and end-all of social analysis. These types collaborate to give us

a vision in which the ultimate string-puller is Daddy Warbucks, the merchant of death who wants to sell arms to perpetual combatants and manipulate oil prices.

The theories endorsed by Johnstone, Conetta and Bani Sadr are full of obvious holes. "The current U.S. global policy" is alleged to be to keep Third World wars going. But selling arms to Iran may in fact facilitate the termination of the war in the form of an Iranian victory. Strengthened by weapons and spare parts supplied by the U.S. and Israel and buoyed by the revelations that Iran is no longer isolated, Iranian troops are pushing back the demoralized Iraqis and closing in on Basra. If Iraq folds (currently a 50/50 proposition), the Reagan administration will surely be seen to have blundered.

The Reagan administration is supposed to have cleverly manipulated the situation. But the arms sales to Iran, which were bound to be publicized rather sooner than later, are now destroying the administration! So the reality is blunders rather than the brilliantly sinister conspiracy Bani Sadr and Johnstone like to imagine. The liberals who accuse the administration of disorganization and not knowing what it's doing are right, and the whining loser, pseudo-radical religious freaks and *cui bono* addicts are wrong.

Thomas Robbins
Rochester, Minn.

Welfare

I DON'T KNOW HOW THE WELFARE SYSTEM IS SET in Illinois, but the reforms Dan Roberts suggests (Letters, Jan. 21) are already in place to some extent in Michigan.

First, as a married father of two, I was not required to leave our home in order to receive AFDC benefits. I was required, however, to prove I was "in the work force" by showing a taxable income of at least \$50 every three months. At one point we were faced with a cutoff of benefits if I could not prove I received a wage for a specific "income quarter." Fortunately, my USWA local has a policy of paying its laid-off members for duties performed on election committees. I was able to dig up the pay stubs and we saved our benefits by beating the minimum income quarter limit by 25¢.

Second, AFDC benefits in Michigan are not cut off when continuous low-wage income is reported. The recipient here is "weaned" from welfare by a formula that provides a reduced monthly benefit in addition to their regular earnings for a period of six months. Unfortunately, at the end of this period, the incentive to work is eliminated. Many people then find themselves in dead-end jobs with no chance of wage

improvement short of organization, and end up working just to pay the babysitter.

Our benefits were cut off when I was recalled to the steel mill in which I worked, and received a wage that disqualified me from even a reduced benefit.

Jack Richman
Brownstown, Mich.

Hochpolitik

THE ARTICLE BY JOHN JUDIS ON THE UPCOMING round of presidential politics (ITT, Jan. 21) justifiably suggests a Hart-Nunn ticket as the Democrats' best chance. The problem is Nunn may not accept. Given the meager nature of the vice president's responsibilities, and given Nunn's cherished chairmanship of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Nunn would certainly have reason to decline an offer for the vice presidency.

But since a Hart-Nunn ticket is so attractive, perhaps this potential obstacle could be overcome by offering Nunn the vice-presidency and the cabinet post of defense secretary. This approach would certainly utilize Nunn's political and technical assets, and it may also establish a good precedent in enhancing the stature and substance of the vice-presidency.

And offering a cabinet post and the vice-presidency to Nunn could create another benefit for Hart. Unlike the normal practice of making cabinet appointments after the election, this appointment would probably have to be made at the party convention. Normally this could be politically risky. But if done properly, the public would appreciate the opportunity of getting information on important cabinet appointments before the election. And in the case of Hart and Nunn, it could be a smashing success.

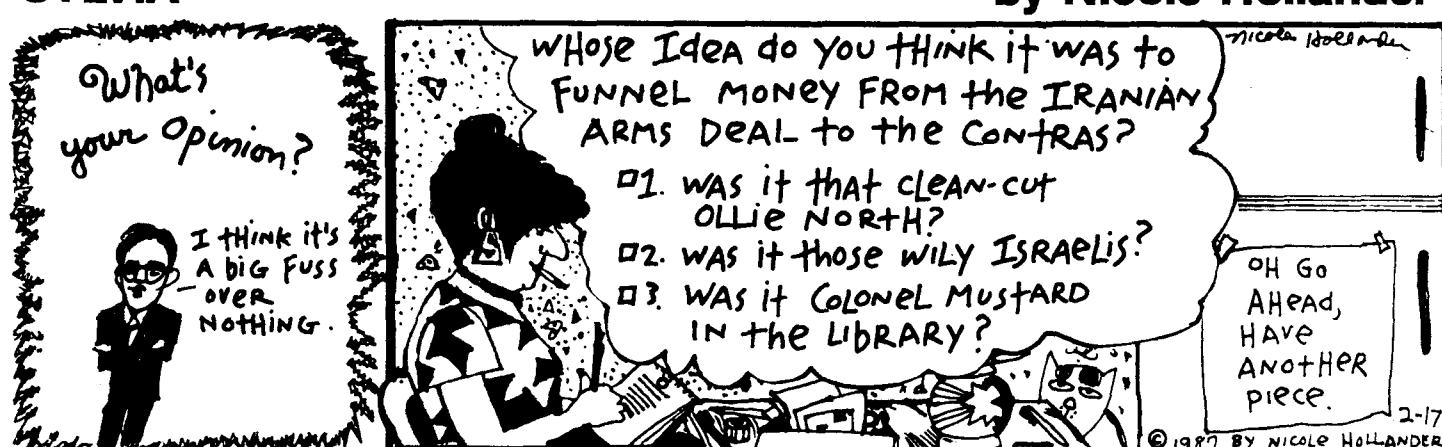
Steven R. Lampman
Liverpool, N.Y.

Corrections

In the February 4 issue of *In These Times*, page 3, retired Gen. Robert Schweitzer and retired Col. Samuel Dickens were incorrectly identified. They are proponents of U.S. contra aid.

In the same edition, the first four sentences of Alexander Cockburn's reply to Alexander Amerisov's letter should have read: "It's true that I don't spend as much time writing about injustices visited upon Soviet Jews as about Palestinians like Haniye. Why? Because everybody writes about the former and almost nobody writes about the latter. I use some of my limited space trying to even up the score a bit."

SYLVIA



by Nicole Hollander

Johnstone hypocritical on Zionism

By Jeffrey C. Isaac

THE HEADLINE OF DIANA JOHNSTONE'S December 17 Perspective, "The denial of Mideast reality hurts Israel" (ITT, Dec. 17, 1986), suggests a genuine concern for the state of Israeli society. But Johnstone has once again provided a simple-minded Israeli history lesson. I am a critical supporter of Israel, a Jew, a socialist and a critic of current Israeli militarism. I am generally an admirer of Johnstone's reporting from Europe. But ever since Johnstone suggested that Mossad may have been responsible for the 1982 anti-Semitic Rue des Rosiers bombing in Paris, on the logic that it had something to gain from discrediting the Mitterrand government, I have discerned an anti-Israeli bias in her reporting, coupled with a troubling insensitivity to the problem of anti-Semitism. (She suggests that "there is reason to be wary of jumping to conclusions," but in this incident, as in others, she has been less than wary in linking even the most nasty anti-Semitic acts, like blowing up synagogues, with Israelis. Could anyone on the left get away with suggesting that the Sabra and Shatila massacres were the secret work of the PLO, on the logic that the massacres did much to discredit the Israeli government, and to fuel the PLO fires?)

She refers in her Perspective to "the vigorous and courageous criticism of Israel by Israelis," but then proceeds to present a "history" of Israel that leads inevitably toward Israeli fascism and Mideastern Armageddon. (What happened to the vigorous criticism? Do fascist states possess the press institutions characteristic of Israel? Does any Arab state? The PLO?) For Johnstone labor Zionism represents the only (no longer real) virtue of Israeli society. The notion of Israel as a refuge for persecuted Jews, particularly those displaced by the Nazi Holocaust, is given short shrift. The reality of Zionism for Johnstone is simply its right-wing version, which has managed deceptively to "reap the moral inheritance of the Holocaust." One is curious to know just what Johnstone believes this moral inheritance is. Might it have anything to do with a genuine fear among Jews of anti-Semitism (Johnstone writes of "a misplaced fear of anti-Semitism"), and a feeling of attachment to a society that claims to represent Jews and to embody Jewish national aspirations?

Johnstone writes disparagingly about the legacy of the Holocaust. She writes that "there is certainly bitter irony in this for all the anti-Zionist Jews who were slaughtered by the Nazis along with the rest." But this is just rhetoric, for she gives no indication that the systematic and wholesale effort to exterminate European Jewry carries any particular moral significance. Moreover, it is callous rhetoric. Is it "ironic" that anti-Zionist Jews were slaughtered "along with the rest"? Is Johnstone suggesting that there were two different categories of murdered European Jews, and that somehow the mass murder of anti-Zionist Jews was less justified, as their fears about Zionism were vindicated? One could argue about the lessons of the Holocaust, and about the merits of

Zionism as a political strategy for Jews, but no sensitive person could fail to recognize the devastating seriousness of the Holocaust and its impact upon contemporary Jewish consciousness.

Johnstone's history is no more sensitive. Does the "very particular political anti-Semitism" of Hitler, or the fact that it was conjoined with "a Pan-German response to the ethnic nationalism shaking the Austro-Hungarian empire" mitigate the fact that it was anti-Semitism? (Johnstone's geopolitical language runs a close second to that of

Instead of a reaction to the Holocaust, the reality of Zionism, for Johnstone, is its right-wing version.

Alexander Haig, and also produces a moral numbing effect.) Can the Holocaust be explained by the "anti-capitalist resentment of small artisans against Jewish capitalists"? (Wasn't the notion of Jewish capital itself a construct of Nazi ideology?) Was this ideology simply a Nazi tool "in ideological combat against the Marxist critique of capitalism," or did it reflect the existence of very real anti-Semitism in Central Europe, one with historical roots and concrete effects in the segregation and intermittent persecution of Jewish people? The effect of Johnstone's account is to reduce the Holocaust to the geopolitical strategies of the Nazi state, themselves reducible to the global class struggle.

Johnstone writes about the "facts" of Zionism, but "facts" require interpretation. Hers is simple: Zionism is reactionary, and only facts that illustrate this are significant. Zionists negotiated with Hitler. (Is this really because their agenda for the Arabs paralleled the Nazi agenda for Slavic Europe? Is there any evidence of a Zionist Final Solution? Is it possible that this negotiation, however wrong, was an act of desperation?) They practiced terror upon Arabs. (This is certainly true, and to be criticized; but was there no Arab terrorism? Or are such Arab practices not part of our story?) They assassinated British officials. (But since when is Johnstone, ever the Third Worldist, averse to a little anti-colonial terror?)

I have been deliberately facetious, and deliberately defensive about Zionism, but not because Zionism is above criticism. Johnstone is correct about one thing—criticism is necessary, in the interests of peace and justice in the Middle East, for Jews and for Arabs. My point is to expose the gross hypocrisy that attends Johnstone's discussions of Israel and the Middle East. Criticism of Israel is not brooked in many quarters of the U.S. establishment, Jewish and Gentile (and let us not mistake support for Israel by the Weinbergers of the world with a concern for Jews). But an unrelentingly venal critique of Israel, barely veiling anti-Semitic sentiments, is increasingly acceptable on the left. Johnstone occasionally softens her rhetoric, as in her conclusion that Israel should no more be wiped out because of

Mossad than the Palestinians should be because of PLO terrorists. But the effect of her article is to paint the worst possible picture of Israel, reversing "a simple dichotomy of good Jews against wicked Arabs" with an equally simple dichotomy of wicked Zionists against good Arabs. Even her conclusion belies her even-handed rhetoric. Mossad, an official agency of the Israeli government, is compared with terrorists acting in the name of Palestinians. But these terrorists are largely the agents of the PLO, which is commonly taken, particularly on the left, to be the official representative of the Palestinian people. We have, then, not on the one side a state, on the other some random terrorists. We have two political movements, one that, through a combination of violence, diplomacy and fortuitous geopolitical circumstance, has established a state, and another that, through the same means, is attempting to do the same. As Noam Chomsky has acknowledged (before Israel had virtually annexed the West Bank and Gaza), the tragedy of this struggle is that both groups have suffered persecution and displacement, both have a legitimate claim upon the land, and neither as presently organized

is capable of recognizing the claim of the other. It is unfortunate that many on the left are incapable of appreciating the full force of this tragedy.

The sad fact is that, at this moment, Israel is the dominant power in the Middle East, and the Palestinian people suffer under an unjust occupation with no foreseeable end. This is a good reason to be critical of Israeli government and society. But this critique should be executed soberly and sympathetically. There are Jewish forces, within Israel and within the U.S., carrying out such a critique. *Peace Now*, and its counterpart, *U.S. Friends of Peace Now*, is one example. *New Jewish Agenda* is another. They go unmentioned in Johnstone's Manichean account. Those interested in genuine peace and justice in the Middle East must attend to the diverse political currents, and must cultivate those, Jewish and Arab, who share that interest. Johnstone is unfair to suggest that all of her pro-Israeli, Jewish critics will stop reading, cancel their subscriptions and attempt to kill the bearer of bad tidings. Many of us recognize the need for critique, but insist that this must be coupled with historical accuracy and political realism. This demands that the critic be sensitive not only to the plight of the Palestinians but also to the historical experience of the Jewish people.

Jeffrey C. Isaac teaches political science at Fordham University.

I don't recognize myself in Isaac's accusations

By Diana Johnstone

JEFFREY ISAAC'S LETTER IS FULL OF totally gratuitous assumptions, false interpretations and even erroneous recollections of what I have written—so many that I have not space here to correct them all.

As all too often when Israel is mentioned, Isaac has chosen to debate with a straw man that I do not recognize: someone who is "Manichean" and "venal," who sees the world as a simplistic encounter between the forces of American imperialism and the forces of Liberation, who suggested that Mossad bombed the Rue des Rosiers, who thinks that fear of anti-Semitism is neither

My adult sympathy for Palestinians doesn't equal my early sympathy for Jews.

genuine nor justified, who is "reluctant to acknowledge" a fact known to everyone, namely that critical supporters of Israel tend to be Jews. I feel a bit left out of this, and wonder if I should intrude in Isaac's polemic with his imaginary adversary.

I grew up at a time and in a family haunted by Nazi persecution of the Jews. Nothing so much marked my early imagination. It was many years before I thought critically about Israel. And I confess that, contrary to Isaac's assumptions, what got me to pay more attention to negative aspects of Israel (all learned from Israeli or Jewish sources) was not so much the Palestinians (whose approach to the political defense of their

cause put me off] as alarm at Israel's increasingly dangerous role in the world. Ironically, Professor Isaac is right when he accuses me of not having the same sympathy for Jews as for Arabs, but he has it backward: my adult recognition of the plight of the Palestinians does not equal the sympathy I felt in my early years for the Jews.

In that distant time the horrors of the death camps had not yet been taken out of the realm of immediate reality by the word "Holocaust," with its otherworldly religious connotations. What the Nazis had done to the Jews could not be summed up in any word. The lessons to be drawn from a historic tragedy of such proportions cannot be laid down once and for all. The moral meaning of the past is constantly redefined as it casts light on new dangers and dilemmas.

I would not presume to say what is "the moral inheritance of the Holocaust." The word is strange to me. Over the past years it has seemed to swallow up the events that had such real meaning and transfer them into some closed temple. The Holocaust is being made as remote to non-Jews as the Crucifixion is to non-Christians. Those who do not belong to the religion are told to stay out and feel guilty about it. This does not work, any more than Jews feel guilty for "killing Christ." It is perhaps an inevitable part of the whole tragedy that the crime of Nazi genocide, of the "final solution," has been increasingly turned into a theological concept. This denies its universality and sets up a separation between Jews and non-Jews that did not exist at the time, when opposition to Nazism brought Jews and non-Jews together.

By Alexander Amerisov

THE SPECIAL PLENUM OF THE CENTRAL Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union that took place on January 27-28 ended with a promise of changes nothing short of revolutionary. Although Mikhail Gorbachov was not able to get the Central Committee to go along with all his proposals, he got agreement on further democratization of the party and the firing of what the final document called those "who sully the title of party member" through personal patronage, immorality and drunkenness—the points on which Gorbachov's followers differ drastically from the majority of party functionaries.

The Plenum exposed clear divisions within the party, pointing to widespread opposition to Gorbachov's reforms among functionaries. It also seems that the number two man in the Politburo, Igor Ligachov, sided—on a question of "stability of cadres"—with the Ukrainian party chief, Vladimir Scherbitsky, a Brezhnevite oppositionist.

Gorbachov's inability to get rid of Scherbitsky points up the degree to which the position of general secretary of the party has been weakened and the Central Committee's power strengthened since Stalin's time.

In his opening Plenum six-hour speech Gorbachov called for multiple candidacies for elected positions. Elections by secret ballot and—within the Soviet context—revolutionary changes within the power structure of Soviet political institutions, first of all the Communist Party. Under Gorbachov's proposals the leaders of primary party organizations, the basic party cells, would be elected by members of those organizations. The members would be able to propose any number of candidacies. The same would apply to county-wide, city-wide and national republic party organizations. The Soviet voters also would be offered a choice of candidates for Councils of Representatives (Soviets). Currently moribund and empty of real power, Soviets would be given increased responsibilities.

Gorbachov went as far as to propose "in time" elections by secret ballot of the highest officials of party branches within national republics and in Moscow. The proposed changes are still far from genuine democratic representation that the most



Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov wants to allow popular initiatives.

Gorbachov reforms portend revolutionary Soviet change

progressive segments of Soviet society desire—if realized, the proposed internal party structures would look more like structures of U.S. trade unions. But while eclectic in terms of internal democracy, this would be a fantastic step forward. It would also set the stage for further, much deeper democratization of Soviet society, especially in conjunction with laws, newly proposed by Gorbachov, for additional protection of

Proposals for reform from below, if realized, could begin a general democratization.

journalists, writers and those who criticize the system. The latter, taken sufficiently far, could become a Soviet equivalent of the First Amendment right to free speech in the American Constitution.

Gorbachov's proposals, if realized, could begin in earnest a transformation of Soviet society from one-party dictatorship to the most democratic in the world because democratization in a society based on public property in the means of production

could not be limited to the political sphere, but would also apply to the work place.

The struggle: "Reforms from below," as Gorbachov has called them, if implemented, would drastically alter the direction of power-flow within Soviet society. It would undermine the power and privileges of those who don't deserve them, and for the first time in Soviet history establish mechanisms through which government and party officials could be held accountable to the Soviet people for their actions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the party elite, which is still mostly of the old type, is resisting vehemently—to the point of staging riots like those in Kazakhstan last December, which used unresolved national grievances of the Kazakhs, and fomenting strikes by workers around the new "quality system."

Gorbachov did not get all he wanted at the special Plenum, but he was able to solidify his position as the general secretary through promotions of several of his supporters to high party positions and by firing several of his opponents. He also seems to have found a way to get his opponent Vladimir Scherbitsky and his opponent on several issues Igor Ligachov to give cheerlead-

ing speeches on the last day of the Plenum. **Popularity as shield:** To maintain his position Gorbachov requires two things: enthusiastic support of the intelligentsia and structural changes within the party and government to allow this popularity to translate itself into legitimate political power. As things stand now Gorbachov has only the former, but this is more than Khrushchov had in 1964, when the Politburo coup met with the approval of a majority of ordinary people.

Gorbachov's popularity today is much greater than Khrushchov's was then. People across the board desire change. They see Gorbachov as their best hope. But the lack of institutions to guarantee change prevents enthusiastic grassroots campaigns for change and keeps the population seemingly apathetic. Today's hope will turn into a bitterness of betrayed expectations if Gorbachov does not move rapidly enough to give people legal channels for becoming a rejuvenating force in Soviet society.

Gorbachov needs help: The process of radical democratization in the Soviet Union is not simply of importance to the Soviet people. Democratic socialism in the Soviet Union would throw the doors wide open for the development of powerful democratic socialist movements around the world, including the U.S. It would demonstrate in reality that freedom and democracy not only can coexist with social ownership in the major means of production, but also that such socialism can be more productive, prosperous and just than even the most advanced democratic capitalist societies. Soviet conservatives have found it easy to attack Gorbachov for the failure of his policy of "reaching out" to the U.S. The Reagan administration, for all its talk about desire for democracy around the world, has neither the desire to stop the arms race nor to see the Soviet Union as democratic. An undemocratic, tyrannical, aggressive, insecure Soviet Union is too good an excuse for getting Americans and Congress to go along with Reagan's domestic and foreign policies.

But Gorbachov needs a more friendly U.S. and some agreement on his disarmament proposals, especially a halt in nuclear testing, in order to strengthen his hand against Soviet conservatives.

Alexander Amerisov edits the *Soviet-American Review*.

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The Captive Public: How Mass Opinion Promotes State Power

By Benjamin Ginsberg
Basic Books, 272 pp. \$18.95

By Fred Glass

IN *THE CAPTIVE PUBLIC: HOW MASS Opinion Promotes State Power*, Cornell professor Benjamin Ginsberg chronicles the adventures of "mass opinion" as it formed and developed under the pressure of class and market forces. With a keen sense of the multiple determinations of the political process, Ginsberg details the evolution of public opinion as a two-sided beast: the power of the masses to impose their will on their "betters," and the power of the latter's new political inventions to help them retain control over society.

Scanning the last three centuries in the U.S. and Europe for supporting evidence, the author shapes his central idea: mass opinion was originally courted by state functionaries and political leaders because state power was not yet developed enough to govern without at least a modicum of popular support. The weak state structure of early industrial capitalism compelled bourgeois politicians "to seek popular support because they lacked other means to curb disorder, bring their foreign and domestic foes to heel and retain a grip on levers of national power." The subsequent dance of rulers and ruled facing each other across the modern mechanisms of state power was accompanied by an ever-swelling orchestra of political institutions and media related to the consideration, manufacture and management of opinion. Eventually, having expanded its services and strength, the state was able to rein in popular opinion for its own uses.

These ideas are not new. But Ginsberg focuses on the interaction of mass opinion and state power through specific technical devices and institutions developed for "the domestication of mass belief." As the author shows, the real effect of mass opinion on political power resembles neither the common-sense understanding of democratic rule by majority will nor a simple, cynical exercise in manipulation of the gullible populace carried out by scheming politicians. A more comprehensive picture describes the broad historical trajectory—from an older participatory politics born in a crucible of revolt to a modern commercial spectacle—in which the citizen occupies a decreasingly active position. The role of public opinion is gradually removed from that of a volatile, unpredictable social force holding politicians to a minimum of responsiveness, toward the toothless guardianship of a tamed and irrelevant electoral process obscuring and legitimizing real power relations.

Passages in *The Captive Public*
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IN PRINT

Opinion managers keep the world safe from democracy

elucidating this process make for some of the book's most interesting reading. In the chapter on opinion polling, for example, we discover that in the 1830s, in pre-bumper sticker London, citizens would place candles or lamps in their windows at pre-arranged hours to espouse certain causes, and that sometimes this public display of sentiment was reinforced with the appearance of mobs at windows not so decorated, demanding an appropriate change of "window dressing." In a more modern context, Ginsberg notes that prior to the development of "scientific" polling the parties of the left usually held a considerable advantage over their right-wing counterparts: direct knowledge of what "the

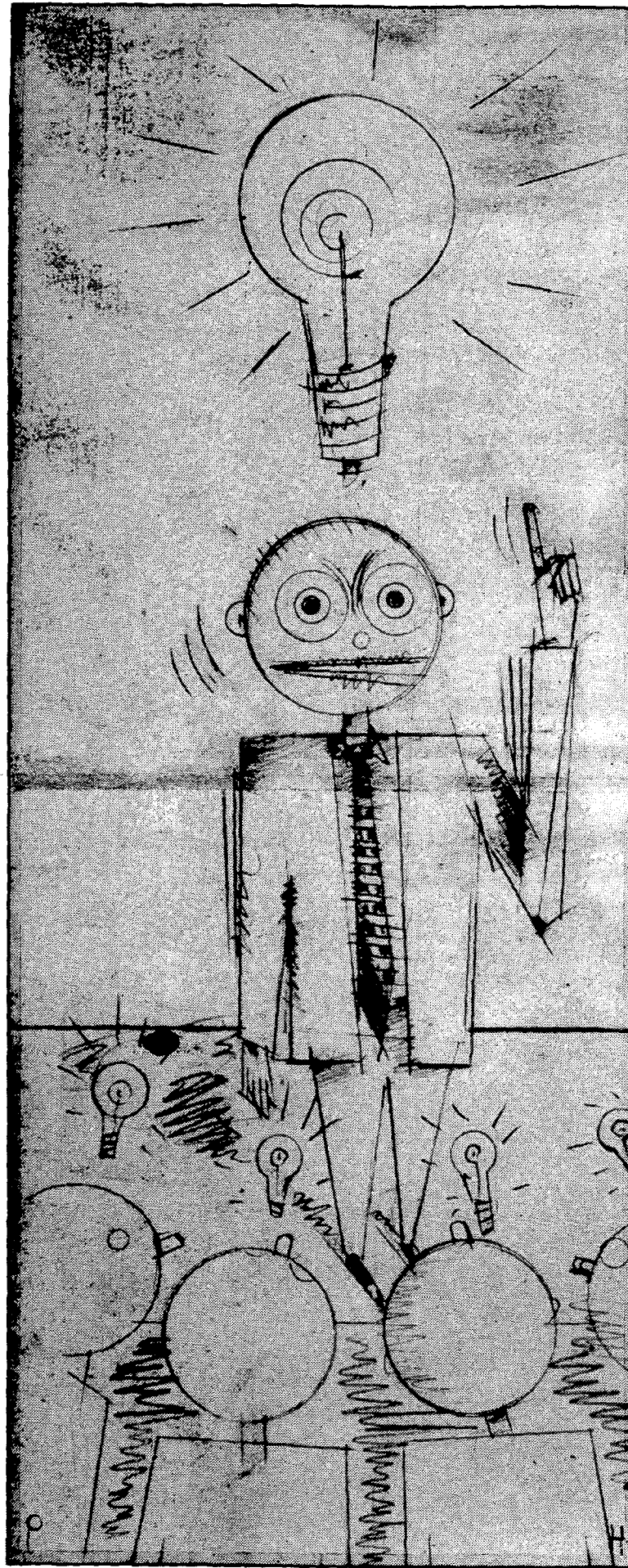
SURVEYS

people" were thinking and feeling. Polling brought the pulse of various publics within reach of the distant but interested hand of capital.

"Safe" public opinion: *The Captive Public* demonstrates that with each new technical device invented to assist partisans in the electoral fray, the ability to achieve meaningful democracy—or, for that matter, the ability to manipulate it—grows more dependent on capital intensive means. The section on polling dissects the democratic and scientific mythologies surrounding the practice, concluding that, in general polling "makes public opinion safer for government."

Ginsberg supports this argument by noting that poll results are the product of the interplay between survey instrument and individual pollee; the poll question itself, like some social application of the Heisenberg principle, can affect the opinion it seeks to measure. Polling also changes the origin of public opinion from direct group expression to a highly mediated synthesis of individuals artificially combined in a sample "mass." Obviously, no politician need fear immediate reprisal from such a non-existent mob. Yet polls command considerable weight in the calculations of elected officials. And this is precisely Ginsberg's point: polls speed the circuit of communication and response in a "respectable" system of safe politics.

Two losers emerge from the increased reliance on such techniques: the left and working-class institutions, which, with the long decline in grassroots activity and party organization, lose touch with their natural bases of political sup-



port. This decay in collective participation in democratic processes was hastened in the U.S. by two large shocks to the political system: first, the Progressive era reforms, which caused plunging participation levels and wrecked local political organization in the wake of its establishment of civil service bureaucracies distinct from party patronage; and second, the post-World War II rise of modern public

relations, including polling, broadcast media, phone banks, direct mail, etc., which further eroded party loyalties and activity. Ginsberg's bleak recounting of this history only darkens when we reach the present.

A chapter called "The Marketplace of Ideas" presents a modified "manipulation theory" position on the function of the mass media. Here, too, "mass opinion" is broken

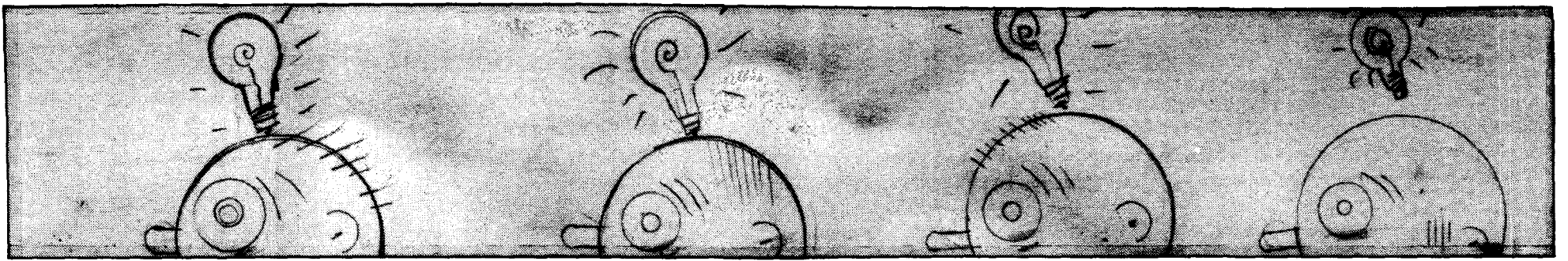
down into some of its actual working segments in the market/class formations. Ginsberg argues persuasively that different classes find themselves in different relationships with television. Buttressed by a vast array of data, Ginsberg shows that the "upper middle classes" have a great influence on the media, its content and preoccupations, through both the production of ideas that the media use, and the consumption of commodities (including ideas) that the media sells.

Selling ideas: The lower classes suffer a more restrictive relationship with electronic media, almost exclusively as consumers of its political ideas and marketing decisions. As Ginsberg tells it, this results from the classic liberal free market notion of ideas as commodities. In the age of the mass media, such a situation results in freedom of expression in public forums mostly for those with the means to purchase it. Thus the "idea market" imposes consumption of available ideological "goods" on the working class, which, limited to a few cans on the shelf, absorbs the worldview of the other class.

Although *The Captive Public* is in large part a derivative effort, Ginsberg's synthetic powers achieve its originality. The chapter on polling, minus the historical asides, covers ground broken elsewhere (Sidney Blumenthal's *The Permanent Campaign*, for instance, or the essay by Robert Westbrook, "Politics as Consumption," in Fox and Lears' *The Culture of Consumption*). The ideas on television and politics are stated more coherently and more fully in Tod Gitlin's *The Whole World Is Watching*. The active manipulation/passive consumption notion is vintage Frankfurt School media analysis. All of which is not necessarily a bad thing. For basic insights the author could have done worse.

In terms of editing, however, this book needs nothing less than a large, sharp axe. The ideas in *The Captive Public* are slowed by a plodding style, leaving Ginsberg's prose in places more like padded lecture notes than a narrative text: a seemingly endless assault of three main factors, five key elements, four basic reasons, etc. There is also too much retracing of the same insights in different chapters, as if the author doesn't quite trust his readers to make the connections from his basic points to elaboration and refinement. Within its stylistic and theoretical limitations, though, *The Captive Public* has much to offer.

Ginsberg's attention to the subjective factor is often good. The French Revolution served notice to national ruling classes outside France that if they wished to command allegiance and zeal from their commoner armies they had to provide a carrot. Patriotism demanded a sense of "ownership" of the nation, a sense purchased relatively cheaply through partial suffrage.



The lower classes suffer a more restrictive relationship with electronic media. The "idea market" imposes consumption of available ideological "goods" on the working class, which, limited to a few cans on the shelf, absorbs the worldview of the other class.

Suffrage was simultaneously a measure of empowerment for workers and a dose of preventive medicine for the ruling classes. It also helped create a nationalist ideological terrain on which the ruling classes were able for the first time to create a dominant ideology in Marx's sense, penetrating the formerly closed cultural spheres of the lower classes. This provided an important push behind the transformation of the working class from producer to consumer of social and political ideas.

Motor for change: Popular opinion, institutionalized within a parliamentary framework, was

thereby transformed from "the natural and spontaneous popular force that confronted [the ruling classes'] predecessors" into an "artificial phenomenon that national governments helped to create and that their efforts continue to sustain." Ginsberg locates the motor for this change in "four key elements":

First, western regimes altered the manner in which mass beliefs were formed. While earlier such beliefs were formulated through social processes, now state agencies were involved in their creation. Second, western governments changed the social basis of public opinion from class to market, thereby converting

lower social classes from producers to consumers of opinion. Third, governments restructured the political foundation of mass opinion, changing the central political perspective underlying popular attitudes from an adversary to a proprietary view of the state. Fourth, governments recast the expression of mass opinion, from a spontaneous citizen-initiated act, into a formal and routine public function.

Aside from a certain blurring of lines between fractions of the ruling class and the state apparatus proper, these elements can reasonably be accorded central place in the transformation of public opinion from mover to moved. A more serious flaw in Ginsberg's design is the depth of the passivity ascribed to the public in his account. The decline of electoral participation in the U.S. from its heyday in the late 19th century due to Progressive reforms reinforces his manipulation thesis, although it should be noted that other social actors besides state officials played important parts here (e.g., corporate leaders and the new professionals). His

story also reveals the problematic nature of popular participation within the confines of party patronage.

But little attention is paid to counterweights: collective cultures of the sort explored in recent labor history, for instance. Ginsberg seems to feel that anarchy or (coopted) institution defines the sole alternative for collective action. Ongoing community frameworks that support social change and democracy receive scant mention in *The Captive Public*, as do the possibilities that the new technologies used by corporate capital and the right wing might, within the limits of smaller bank accounts, be used effectively by the left. And Ginsberg never considers that grassroots activism may be born anew on a broad scale.

These oversights may have to do with methodological problems inherent in the notion of "mass opinion" itself. In his case study examples, the author clearly demonstrates awareness of multiple publics within the more vague category. But a gap remains between

these concrete explorations and the overarching theoretical formulations of *The Captive Public*.

Ginsberg makes a strong case for the position that democracy is the product in Western capitalism of a historic window of opportunity, one which for all intents and purposes has now closed. No longer does the state in most advanced capitalist countries need popular support to govern—at least not for the same reasons that it did in its earlier incarnation. Mass opinion has been harnessed in the 20th century and turned around, eventuating in the triumph of the state over the public, of capital over "labor-intensive" politics, and in the process creating new options for ruling classes should they grow weary of the complex balancing acts involved in parliamentary democracy. Ginsberg stops short of predicting the end of capitalist democracy in the near future. But his nuanced analysis helps bring that possibility into sharper focus. ■

Fred Glass is a union organizer and media consultant who lives in San Francisco.

Liberalism at Work: The Rise and Fall of OSHA

By Charles Noble
Temple University Press, 292 pp., \$29.95

By Lance Selfa

IN 1970, FOLLOWING A WAVE OF WORKERS' struggles to promote occupational safety and health, the U.S. Congress established the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), directing it to establish a safe and healthy environment for all working Americans.

Not more than a decade later OSHA became the lightning rod of business criticism for "overregulation." Under the Reagan administration its enforcement budgets have been stripped to the bone, its standard-making capabilities curtailed. OSHA officials now use their positions to campaign for business "regulatory relief."

Yet for all of its initial promises, and for all of the conservative vilification it has earned, OSHA has little to show for its efforts, according to Charles Noble's *Liberalism at Work: The Rise and Fall of OSHA*.

Noble puts it quite starkly: "It is unlikely that OSHA had a major effect on the safety of American workers between 1971 and 1984 [i.e., when data were available]. The agency seems to have reduced the risks of occupational diseases for workers in a few industries, such as textiles, and helped

OSHA: when politics becomes a major occupational hazard

to prevent some kinds of accidents, such as explosions. Overall, however, OSHA's standard-setting and enforcement activities must be judged a failure, in relation both to the hazards that workers face and to the goals of the OSH Act."

Unsafe liberal reforms: Noble is a left-liberal academic who makes no effort to conceal his sympathy for the cause of workers' health and safety in his criticism of OSHA's "liberal reform" approach. He describes how OSHA emerged from the ferment of 1968-70—a period that saw a three-week walk-out for black lung benefits among West Virginia miners and a wave of wildcat strikes over working conditions—coupled with a burgeoning health and safety movement that centered on physicians and other professionals (some allied with the Nader-affiliated Health Research Group).

These events concided with a general White House and congressional interest in "quality of life" reform issues that would deflect some of the political heat Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs were generating. Congressional sentiment for the legislation that became the OSH Act was so strong that even the Nixon administration

refused to block it, despite a relentless big-business campaign against the bill. It finally passed in 1970.

But in conception and in practice OSHA was guaranteed to fall short, Noble argues. OSHA's set-up as a command-and-control regulatory agency that eschewed shop-floor participation in standards-

HEALTH

setting and enforcement left it few avenues of support when business mounted its counterattack in the mid-'70s. With few exceptions, the AFL-CIO leadership, firmly wedded to "business unionism," depended on unreliable politicians to preserve the agency. Labor leaders, Noble shows, avoided mobilizing of workers or forming coalitions with the most representative organizations of the health and safety movement, the local committees on occupational safety and health (COSHs).

"By the late 1970's," Noble writes, "business had retaken the ideological offensive and organized labor had failed to resist the assault. Labor's conventional strategy proved less and less successful as economic conditions worsened and business pressure mounted."

White House nemesis: Specifically, business think tanks and sympathetic politicians harped on the theme of "overregulation," blaming agencies like OSHA for U.S. economic troubles. Business succeeded in isolating the advocates of social regulation in the policy debate, opening the door to the sacrifice of health and safety to probusiness "cost-benefit analysis." The White House, under Ford, Carter and Reagan, emerged as the chief conduit of this anti-OSHA feeling, subordinating OSHA activity and "independence" to the dictates of regulatory review panels and the

In conception and in practice, OSHA was guaranteed to fall short.

Office of Management and Budget.

While Noble the social scientist uses the OSHA case to finger the failures of "liberal" reform, Noble the health and safety advocate proposes a policy, *a la* Sweden's, that relies on bargaining among the government, a national employer association and a national union federation to set and enforce health

and safety standards. Moreover, he calls for greater regulation of the economy and the attendant health and safety matters.

Whether the policies Noble advocates would improve workers' health and safety is purely hypothetical, of course, in the absence of the necessary government structures and private organizations in the U.S. Nevertheless, it is instructive that Noble relies on government support for the creation of a pro-labor health and safety apparatus that could develop its own standards.

OSHA's feeble attempts to develop standards independent of the network of business trade and private safety associations that urge voluntary compliance to industry-written safety standards, represented a step forward for workers. But workers' health and safety is not simply a question of the proper use of highly technical information. The early health and safety movement represented by the miners' wildcat strikes of 1968-70, drew its strength from its ability to link health and safety concerns to questions of power on the shop floor. A government safety and health agency, even a more pro-labor agency of the type Noble envisions, is no substitute for a workforce mobilized to protect its own health and safety. ■

Lance Selfa writes regularly for the monthly *Socialist Worker*.

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Dial Down to Jesus

The odds are increasing that when you dial down to public radio (FM 88 to 92) you'll reach a prayer or a sermon. Since 1978, religious groups—mostly evangelical and often self-consciously conservative politically—account for the majority of all noncommercial applications. And, the most recent report from the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB) shows, applications for public radio licenses have skyrocketed since 1983. Why? Part of the answer is in "franchise" operations, which pre-package license requests to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and provide canned programming for locals who offer little more than a local name and address to justify their community services. A request by one university-based and secular station to investigate the "franchisers" is gathering dust at the FCC. (The FCC appears unalarmed by the evangelical assault on public radio, as witnessed by its decision in the KNON case (see page 5). The NFCB, an organization that grew out of the feisty days of community radio in the '60s, is considering a "Don't Mourn, Organize" strategy, encouraging nonsectarian community groups to seize the spectrum while they still can.

You Can't Do That on TV

CBS standards-and-practices people seem skittish these days, as well they might if they watch *The Morning Program*. The notorious liar "Joe Isuzu," who makes outrageous claims that subtitles deflate, has gone too far for them. In an upcoming spot he says that if he's lying "may lightning strike my mother," after which... CBS standards-and-practices people asked to tone down the mother-zapping (no word on God or apple pie, though). Meanwhile, the right wing—apparently unsated with ABC's *Amerika*—is putting pressure on CBS. *Human Events* reporter Cliff Kincaid berated the network in the *Washington Times* for programming *My Dissident Mom* about a housewife who gets involved with the anti-nuclear movement, calling it propaganda and child abuse. According to the trade magazine *Electronic Media*, CBS officials actually removed the program from its schedule before reinstating it months later, when the fuss had died down.

Who's Got the Balance?

Conservatives, who love to liberal-bash public TV, took a day off when the privately-made *The Conservatives*, a hagiography of the William Buckley-Richard Viguerie branch of the right wing, aired. While some were trying to figure out where the \$500,000 to make the tacky production had gone, others were jubilant. President Reagan proudly dubbed it "not a B-movie," while more acerbic rightists called it the conservative response to *The Africans*. PBS, under heavy pressure from the right for its public affairs programming, has begun an in-house investigation of "balance" in programming; *The Conservatives* indeed looks like an interim sop. Meanwhile, the San Francisco station KQED's *Flashpoint* series—intended as a display of differing points of view on controversial issues—continues to be a touchy subject. Its Middle East program was rejected, among others, by lead public stations in Washington and New York, and was finally shown in January as part of the "Endangered Documentary" series in New York by Global Village Media Center.

Put Your Message Where?

Chinese television may be state-owned and run, but it's looking for Western programs, and even advertisers, to pitch to viewers of its 80 million TV sets. One big limitation: the government is still in charge of the economy, and hard put to prove to advertisers that it could meet TV-fed demand, given import controls. But those who have advertised haven't really been looking for a consumer market. A prime example is Boeing, which sells airplanes to the government but paid for an image-buffing ad on TV.

MTV Activism

Jackson Browne, whose *Lives in the Balance* album indicting U.S. policy in Central America has limped in sales, has put his money where his mouth is. Besides lobbying for air time with radio stations, he's personally funded a video being shown on MTV. Produced by independent documentarian Hart Perry (who also worked on the *Sun City* video), the piece uses footage from left documentaries on Central America. Browne wants the video not only to boost record sales but to put in front of American video-addicts "the real faces of the Nicaraguans who are mourning their dead."

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On the march, whining through intimidation



Narcissism cuts a mighty swath through the new South in *Sherman's March*.

Sherman's March
Directed by Ross McElwee

By Pat Aufderheide

SHERMAN'S MARCH IS ANOTHER of the recent movie hits that bounce cheerfully off the foil of the blockbuster syndrome. It's a "little" independent documentary that has been making the rounds since last fall—yet even though it logs in at more than two hours, it still has ticket-buyers lining up in the dead of winter.

This is a shaggy-man story. Filmmaker Ross McElwee got a grant to make a documentary retracing the bloody steps of Gen. Tecumseh Sherman and his army through the South. He was fascinated by Sherman's contradictions—a superb warrior who hated war, a destroyer of Southern life who loved the South, a success who was later universally reviled. But the anxiety-ridden filmmaker, scion of a well-to-do Southern family, was thrown off stride when his girlfriend walked out on him. As he put off making the film by filming his own attempts to strike up relationships with a set of improbably wonderful women, his journey became the film.

Still, Sherman survives as a parallel theme, and one that hints at the larger sense of the film. Sherman's march dictates McElwee's path, but the contrast also reinforces McElwee's self-portrayal as an absurd figure. Sherman's self-perceived failure serves as a touchstone for McElwee's flailing incompetence. And the contradiction between Sherman's passionate love of the South and his ability to destroy civilian populations for a cause becomes a metaphor for the search for a way to live in apocalyptic times.

McElwee may be a whiner, but he's a whiner on the grand scale. The film's subtitle tells you, right up front, what he's after. It's "a meditation on the possibilities of romantic love in the South during an era of nuclear weapons proliferation." When life gets lonely, McEl-

wee stays up thinking about nuclear doom.

If he can't get his film started, he can't get his life started either. He takes his rambunctious sister's advice to use his camera as a come-on, and instead uses it as a substitute: "I'm filming a life to have a life," he says. But he has plenty of help in striking this cagily distanced pose. People in the middle-

FILM

class, mostly white South he samples are perfectly willing to strike up an intimate relationship with a camera. The women he meets are delightful and directed, particularly so in contrast to McElwee's maundering tentativeness. But again and again, the filmmaker stumbles across themes that inform his own predicament.

Survivalist makeup: There's Claudia, for instance, a gentle Southern model of femininity, now divorced, who spends hours on her makeup. She consorts with a crowd of survivalists. Their camp not only has post-nuclear supplies and sub-machine guns but also has tennis courts. There's an old girlfriend who's been dedicated for years to opposing a nuclear plant and, now "cynical," is moving to California so that she won't have to feel responsible to a community. There's a Mormon teacher with a lovely voice and a taste for easy-listening music who's turned her family's basement into a fallout shelter.

Not everyone is obsessed with nuclear doom, but everyone's grappling with the task of inventing a life without frameworks or traditions. Wini, a graduate student in linguistics, has fled the pressures and pettiness of academic competition to a small island, where she lives as a survivalist before the fact and provides Ross with a bug-ridden bed and conversation.

Other women have nothing to say but a lot to show. Ditsy would-be actress Pat and pretty-good nightclub singer Charleen are both looking for celebrity and quite sure they'll be thrilled when they find it.

As Ross mooches mournfully on feminine strategies for survival in

"an era of nuclear weapons proliferation," we begin to feel like McElwee—groping in the dark for something called life, and a little perplexed to see it in front of the camera and still not be able to get it. McElwee's old high school teacher, who tries to set him up for marriage, explains in exasperation that there's nothing to get: "Hell, it's all a tragedy," she says. "It's just a matter of getting through it." The secret, she says, is in pretending; just act as if you love her, she'll love you, and there you go, living just as if it all meant something.

It's a horrifying breakthrough. That statement suddenly puts into relief the valiant, poignant quality in the tales that McElwee has been dutifully recording on both sides of the camera. It adds up the two sides, one woebegone and the other all-too-chipper. Together, they define not only a common male-female dilemma but the gap between a monstrously powerful social structure and the potential of individual achievement. McElwee's march is through a territory of lost souls, all looking for something to believe in.

Heroic narcissism: McElwee is not just a wimp. He's a large-screen wimp, a Wimp as Celebrity, a wimp to make Woody Allen look macho. With this movie he's made middle-class male anxiety into a heroic position. He's demonstrated a kind of genius in an age of narcissism, by turning his self-doubt into a character that creates, by making anxiety into action and putting it behind a camera, by making the subject of confusion-of-purpose into an odyssey. And he finds a response in people willing to engage and indulge his camera-eye character.

The near-miraculous set of coincidences and serendipities in the film give McElwee's wandering narrative a paranoid coherence. McElwee's attempt to make contact with the Southern star and macho symbol Burt Reynolds, for instance, becomes a larger-than-life reproof to McElwee's Southern wimphood and his pretensions to be a filmmaker, as well as a statement about the triumph of image over reality in American identity. The Reynolds encounter is only one of the precisely-edited collection of exemplary incidents that add up to this "meditation." Wherever McElwee goes, he finds a lesson in it, and finds himself in it—reflected badly.

With *Sherman's March*, Ross McElwee has redefined narcissism in popular art, not as a pathology but as a generalized condition. He's made himself the butt of this onslaught, and (with Southern chivalry) given women the heroic role in his saga. But the empty space between the subjects of the camera and its operator perhaps says more than any of them mean to say about the future for an apocalyptic era.

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IN THE ARTS



Amerika's dream may become a programming nightmare.

Continued from page 24
tory of Reagan's America masquerading as a tale of the future. But the plot lurches in so many directions at once with so little logic that trying to follow it may involve an ultimately hopeless act of concentration.

Under this apparent confusion lies a strange push-me/pull-you dynamic involving network and right-wing interests, as an evidently desperate writer (or writers) struggled to glue into the script yet one more element from our fantasy past and present: you've got '50s Cold War paranoia about Russians taking over small Midwest towns; '60s California touchy-feelyism (applied to the family farm); '70s disaster films, '80s new patriotism, shades of Ronald Reagan and Martin Luther King and John F. Kennedy, not to speak of bits from just about any movie or TV show you might want to mention—all this and more poured into a cinematic Cuisinart and churned into a single script.

It might, of course, be argued that this represents a calculated attempt to co-opt certain symbolic elements central to our culture into a right-wing framework of virulent anti-Sovietism. But I think it more sensible to see *Amerika* as a vast, goofy, if horrifying, compromise between two kinds of politics, two kinds of visions, two kinds of needs, which may overlap but are hardly the same—those of our own home-

grown right wing and those of our corporate entertainment managers.

It's not hard to grasp the right-wing part of this formula. It's evident in the show's origin in right-wing columnist Ben Stein's 1983 suggestion that the networks produce a response to *The Day After* to be called "In Red America"—the sort of title that brings to mind '50s B films of Commie troops goose-stepping up Pennsylvania Avenue. Stein's script suggestions—he may even have done a treatment later rejected by ABC—had a similar feel: 24-hour-a-day show trials, priests executed on TV, and so on.

But the network contribution to *Amerika*, though harder to document, is a more curious matter. While the desire of the right wing let loose on television is naturally to launch a search-and-destroy mission against its ideological foes, the natural inclination of a network is to offend no major group of potential viewers. After all, the name of the game is twofold: not letting audiences switch channels, while delivering them in demographic packages to advertisers in moods those advertisers imagine appropriate for their products. When the networks take on political issues two axioms apply: come in late and bland it out.

Rightward ho! What then of *Amerika*? As a start, ABC certainly came in late. 1983, the date of Stein's suggestion, was already well

along in Ronald Reagan's first term; and the May 1984 official announcement by ABC of a projected two-hour movie then to be called *Topeka, Kansas...USSR* (and only later expanded to a miniseries) was safely at the edge of second-term Reaganmania. Undoubtedly, ABC was convinced that America was safely into a new Cold War mood and solidly into its rightward swing. So, while it may have been "daring" by network standards to take on such a project, it still involved a basic bringing-up-the-rear strategy.

Following normal network bland-out tactics, ABC then rejected Stein's approach—evidently convinced that a straightforward right-wing paranoid treatment of the subject was hardly a sexy way to approach a mass audience attuned to *Dallas*, *Cosby* and MTV.

What happened next is murkier. A less-than-famous Hollywood writer, Donald Wrye, was brought in to script, direct and produce the project—but whether as a right-wing hitman or as a focal point of network control no one knows. Beyond that, for whatever reasons—ABC's desire to pledge fealty to Reagan's America, its analysis of what would play best in Topeka, Kansas...USA, or simple confusion and muddleheadedness—the normal politics of network control (and TV has an extraordinary record when it comes to pacifying all visions outside its own) failed in this case to absorb the wackier political vision of the right.

The result is an uneasy embrace between the mega-fantasies of the right and the mega-fantasies of a network in search of a ratings breakthrough. Whether either party has squeezed the other to death in this media version of a Russian bear hug remains to be seen, but the script's special goofiness betrays evidence both of the bizarre confusions inherent in a Reaganesque view of America and of the standoff this particular network/right-wing alliance has engendered.

Just take the simple matter of heroes and villains. Who, for instance, is that man with those "quintessential American" looks? Why he's KGB Col. Andrei Denisov, one of the two key Russians sent here to control a fragmented Amerika. Who, then, surveying the bleak landscape of this occupied land, says sadly, "You don't know how many people looked to the American experiment as the answer—the hope"? Why, the same Col. Denisov, one of the script's implicit heroes and its most direct mouthpiece for far-right analysis. And which distraught character commits suicide just after the Russians have destroyed that consummate American symbol, the U.S. Capitol? Why, Petya Samanov, the grieving KGB general in charge of the operation.

Empathetic KGB: So assume for a moment that in the 1990s an oddly empathetic KGB is the great

supporter of lost American values. What, then, of the opposition? The main resistance figure is Devin Milford, played by Kris Kristofferson, clearly chosen for his soft, sensitive, almost passive image. Milford is a former Vietnam veteran and antiwar activist with Gandhian principles whose curriculum vitae network execs undoubtedly thought would lend the show a "liberal" counterweight. Could it be, then, that this seven-night saga is far too sophisticated for old-fashioned villainy? Well, not exactly. The scriptwriters have simply imported a villain from an old World War II movie: a German (Eastern brand, of course) known only as Helmut, who in his cold-blooded sadism is meant to offend no audience imaginable other than the Aryan Brotherhood.

Such confusion and awkward compromise between right-wing politics and a network desire for appeasement extends to every page of the script and turns it into an endless series of schizoid acts of misappropriation. To the viewer, this may make itself felt as rifts of neutralizing boredom, for the show is unlikely to have the feel of a seamless right-wing fantasy—the sort of presentation Reagan himself pioneered in happier times. In fact, by night two any clever counterprogrammer at CBS or NBC should be able to lure crowds away in droves from this on-rushing Winds of Snore.

Of course, to guess about the success or failure of a show on the basis of a production script and a few clips is a perilous venture. Still, the attempts of the Hollywood studios to certify their loyalty in

the McCarthy era by doing similarly direct Russian subversion or takeover films failed dismally at the box office; and an '80s update may prove no more popular. Of course, *Rocky IV* and *Rambo* are cited in any discussion of new Cold War box office draws, but in both cases the hero and the heroics were far more important than the nature of the enemy (and *Amerika*'s cast contains no Sylvester Stallone to keep the home folks glued to their sofas). After all, *Rockies I, II and III* and *First Blood* ("Rambo I") succeeded with not a Russian in sight. On the other hand, the far more straightforward Genghis Khanian *Red Dawn* failed, despite those Russians parachuting into the Southwest and American school kids acting like Vietnamese guerrillas.

Succeed or fail, who has actually occupied whom in *Amerika*? Has the network, as many critics want to believe, simply been colonized by far-right propagandists seeking a direct channel into the American brain? Or has the right wing been neutralized as network history would lead one to expect? Perhaps it would be most accurate to think of *Amerika* as one of those children's toys, a Transformer, frozen in mid-transformation: the result may turn out to be neither a sleek vehicle nor a mighty warrior robot, but an ungainly, immobilized creature, efficacious neither for the politics of the right nor for those of the networks and their advertisers.

■
Tom Engelhardt is an editor at Pantheon Books. His essay on children's toys appears in the new collection *Watching Television*, edited by Todd Gitlin.



An alley for change: San Francisco area artists have painted a block-long homage to Latin America's people, in response to U.S. intervention in Central and South America. Two dozen murals, like the one pictured above, line Balmy Alley's fences, garage doors and back walls on both sides of the popular thruway near 24th Street. The artists call themselves PLACA, a Spanish acronym that means "a personal mark of self-expression that calls for a response."

Garbage

Continued from page 13

ing them into electricity."

Davies talks with pride about the \$237 million Signal plant in Peekskill, N.Y., a state-of-the-art incinerator located next door to the Indian Point nuclear reactors along the Hudson River. The "mass burn" facility, which burns garbage in the same condition it is delivered, without any material separation, went on line in 1984. In its first full year of operation the plant burned its maximum permitted capacity of 657,000 tons of garbage, operating at peak efficiency, according to Charles Miles, director of operations for the division of solid waste management of the Westchester County Department of Public Works.

Garbage trucked to the facility from surrounding communities is lifted by cranes and then dropped down chutes that feed the furnace. The trash is burned at temperatures of 2,800 degrees Fahrenheit. The walls of the furnace are lined with hundreds of pipes filled with water. When heated, the water turns to steam and drives turbines to produce electricity, which, in turn, is sold to utilities.

Communities who use the facility are charged a tipping fee of about \$40 a ton, according to Miles. The residual ash—amounting to about 70,000 tons a year—is then trucked to a landfill six miles north of

the facility. But the amount of garbage collected in Westchester County—740,000 tons a year—now exceeds the plant's permitted capacity.

And so, after just one year, the plant, which Miles says has a projected lifetime of 20 years, already cannot handle the volume of garbage produced by Westchester County. The overflow, according to county officials, is currently being trucked to two landfills—one in Connecticut, the other in Orange County, N.Y., each about an hour's drive away. And, in addition to the hauling costs, Westchester is paying tipping fees of about \$34 a ton to use those dumps.

Yet Miles continues to believe that, despite the plant's apparent shortfall, incineration is the best option in the short-term to deal with the growing mountain of garbage. "If you don't build incinerators," he says, "the only alternative is landfills."

The builders of the Peekskill plant, Signal Environmental Systems, now command a 24 percent share of the market, making it the largest designer, builder and operator of refuse-to-energy plants in the U.S., according to Davies. The company's recent history reflects the fact that trash-burning facilities have become a hot property on Wall Street. Originally called Signal Resco, the company was the result of a merger between Wheelabrator-Frye and the Signal Corporation in 1983. In 1985, ownership changed again as the Allied Corporation, with more than \$10

billion in revenues, merged with Signal. Now the company is part of the Henley Group, a conglomerate of more than 30 companies.

In addition to its Peekskill and Baltimore facilities, Signal operates three other plants in the U.S., which together burn about 10,000 tons of garbage a day. Three more are under construction and another five are contracted. One of those under contract to build is New York City's massive Brooklyn Yard facility, which, with its plans to burn 3,000 tons of garbage a day, will be the largest resource recovery plant in the world.



The first national conference for community groups battling trash-burning plants convened in Washington, D.C., last November. It was sponsored by the Citizens Clearinghouse on Hazardous Wastes in Arlington, Va., the group organized by Lois Gibbs, the housewife who gained notoriety for challenging polluters at Love Canal. The "Solid Waste Action Project" conference, as it was called, brought together 125 community activists from 20 different states to discuss tactics and strategy.

"A lot of time," says Will Collette, program developer for the Citizens Clearinghouse, "was spent discussing ways to counteract the lies and misconceptions that are commonly promoted by the industry when communities are looking at...[an] incinerator proposal—you know, that it's a magic answer, that it's a quick fix to the garbage crisis, that it will create wondrous amounts of revenue and have the added bonus of selling energy."

What the incinerator companies don't talk about, Collette says, are the problems. Like in Philadelphia, where there is no landfill within the immediate area that will accept fly ash from municipal incinerators. "They tried to barge it down the coast to dump it illegally in Virginia, but residents got wise to this and organized to stop it," Collette says. Philadelphia also tried to truck it across the state of Pennsylvania to a landfill in Ohio, but residents formed a human chain around the dump and blockaded the trucks. Eventually, he says, they succeeded in stopping the dumping there.

A third attempt to ship the ash to a landfill in South Carolina was rebuffed, Collette continues, when citizens called in the state health authorities, who determined that the fly ash had a concentration of toxics that posed a threat to public health. Philadelphia, he says, is still desperately seeing a dumping site for its ash.

Then there is the problem of financial failure, according to Collette, who cited the case of the "Tuscaloosa Turkey," an incinerator built in Tuscaloosa, Ala., and financed by \$8.5 million in municipal bonds. The city is struggling to keep from defaulting on the

bonds because of the incinerator's poor performance, according to Collette. "Failures like Tuscaloosa are starting to hurt taxpayers," Collette says, "and the promises that have been made by industry about efficiency and revenue are proving to be total crap."

"The general consensus of the meeting was that, while Joe and Suzy Homemaker have a responsibility, the real culprit is the corporation who denies consumers viable choices. It's wrong to attack consumers for their habits when they're essentially denied choices up and down the product line," he concludes.



The burning question for many communities who have run out of landfill space is: what's the best way to get rid of our trash? There are three alternatives to the solid waste crisis, according to Al Conklin, an engineer with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. "We can bury it, recycle it or burn it. That's what it boils down to, and no one alternative will resolve the problem 100 percent. You need all three," he says.

Conklin's pronouncement—"you need all three..."—sounds like a throwback to the days of the energy crisis, when the U.S. Department of Energy officialdom offered similar assessments of our energy resources: we need all three—fossil fuels, nuclear power and solar energy (along with conservation). Unfortunately, when the budgets were calculated, solar energy and conservation always got shorted. Recycling, like solar energy and conservation before it, has won a lot of lip service, but failed to receive strong financial backing from the government, either in direct support or subsidies. It is uneconomical for companies to produce using recycled paper, for instance, because the timber industry receives enormous tax breaks when it cuts down virgin forests for the manufacture of wood and paper products (see *In These Times*, Nov. 19, 1986).

Much like the rise in oil prices forced a change of habit in American consumption, so, too, has the rise in the cost of landfilling and incineration sparked a new interest in recycling in a number of communities. More than \$5 billion is spent by communities to dispose of their trash each year, making it one of the largest tax burdens on the local homeowner.

And just as in the energy crisis there is a tendency to avoid asking the larger questions. With the production of electricity, those larger questions were: what are we using the power for, do we need all this power and are there more efficient ways of generating it or using it?

With the coming garbage crisis, they are: can we find ways to reduce the amount of waste in the manufacturing process, do we really need all the disposable products being manufactured and what are the ways we can reduce the amount of trash entering the waste stream?

And, just like with energy conservation measures, educating the consumer and changing profligate habits is an important part of the process.

"It's all a matter of getting into the habit, and giving citizens a how-to and where-to approach," says Ken Sandusky, recycling coordinator for Lane County in Eugene, Ore., explaining the success of the county's recycling program. His department visits 8,000 schoolchildren a year to spread the gospel of recycling, hoping to create in their hearts and minds a recycling ethic.

Richard Asinof writes regularly for *In These Times* on environmental issues.

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AND TO BE DEVIOUS LITTLE WEASELS.

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NEW YORK

February 13-15

A conference for student activists, "Turning the Corner: Progressive Organizing for the Post-Reagan Era," sponsored by the Democratic Socialists of America at Barnard College/Columbia University in New York City. Sessions on South Africa, Central America, reproductive rights, campus organizing, U.S. social and economic policy. Speakers include Michael Harrington, Barbara Ehrenreich, Richard Barnett, Jerry Herman, Harry Britt. Last year's

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LOS ANGELES

March 1

"No Pasaran! A Theatrical Tribute to the Abraham Lincoln Brigade," Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, 1855 Main St., Santa Monica. 3:00 p.m. Ed Asner, Esther Rolle and Howard Hesseman are among the actors in moving play about the Spanish Civil War. Also, art exhibits, photos, posters and music with Lighthouse. Program to honor 50 Southern California Brigade veterans. \$25 and \$15 available from Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, (213) 759-6063, Ticketron and at the door.

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IN THESE TIMES FEB. 11-17, 1987 23

The Winds of Snore



Right-wing blather meets network bland-out in

AMERIKA

from Z to shining ZZZ...

By Tom Engelhardt

THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING the 14-hour-plus, seven-night miniseries *Amerika*, which ABC hopes will mesmerize a nation and win high ratings in a key sweeps month, has settled into a simple and expectable mold. Magazines to the left, from *Mother Jones* (which devoted a whole issue to the miniseries) to *Tikkun*, from *The Progressive* to *The Nation* have attacked it as an onrushing emblem of Age-of-Reagan culture and right-wing fantasy in the ascendant. Groups from Educators for Social Responsibility to the American Friends Service Committee are organizing against it as a symbol of a demented anti-Sovietism rampant. And they all have a point.

This much-publicized \$32 million extravaganza, which has already involved ABC, Moscow and the Reagan administration in a propaganda war more dramatic than anything in its script, tries hard to imagine America in the wake of a Russian occupation. The Russians, it seems, have been supported in their take-over by snarling pseudo-Nazis, crazed Cubans, American collaborators, a web of gulags and a plot line that makes suspension of disbelief into an act of grace—although amidst the ongoing Iran/contra revelations, perhaps no scenario, not even two of our three 1988 presidential candidates being Russian dupes, is too far-fetched to imagine.

All this reeks, as its critics expected, of the worst sort of right-wing daydreaming. Add to it other more-or-less commonplace Age-of-Reagan fantasies—the U.N. as a Russian front (Beachhead Big Apple!); a cancerous social humanism (drugs and free love eating away at an America gone soft); evil Russians speaking of a “final solution” to the American problem (Heil Gorbachov!); ambitious career women as America’s natural turncoats, whores and traitors; the media establishment as tools of Moscow; Angolans and Cubans raping good American women (not to be confused with the above-mentioned careerists)—and you have distinctive signposts to the crackpot script straight out of right field that *Amerika*’s critics are now gunning for.

Historic TV gridlock: In television terms, however, *Amerika* may prove a far more bizarre and confused viewing experience than anyone has yet suspected—or so a reading of its 579-page production script and a preview of a half hour of assorted clips from the program would indicate. In fact, if you want to catch some historic TV gridlock, *Amerika* may be the miniseries to watch. Its story of how a drug- and alcohol-dazed population living in utter demoralization in a wrecked country slowly climbs back toward self-respect and resistance is sort of a right-wing version of the his-

Continued on page 21